# A HISTORY OF THE U. S. S. R.

COMPILED

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# A HISTORY
*of the*
# U.S.S.R.

# EARLY TIMES

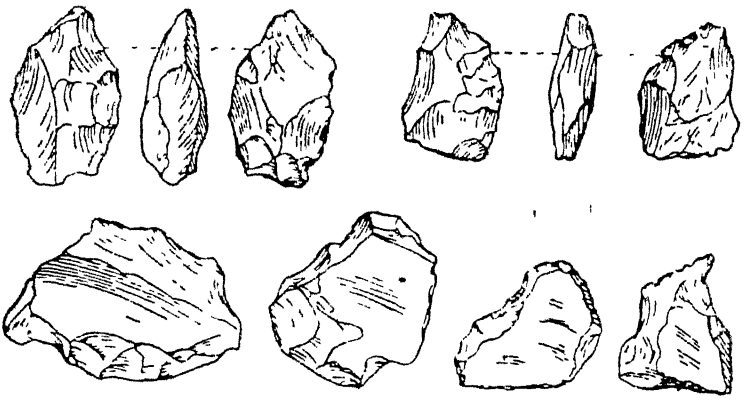
## *Chapter I*

## THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY SYSTEM IN OUR COUNTRY

### 1. PRIMEVAL HUMAN SOCIETY

**The Birth of Human Society.** The first traces of human life in Europe date back to that distant period when the climate was warm and humid. The luxuriant, evergreen forests consisted of laurel, box, yew and other species of trees. The woods and riverbanks abounded in animals which today are either extinct (as the pre-historic elephant, and a peculiar genus of rhinoceros) or which now occur only in southern lands (as the hippopotamus and leopard).

Human beings lived in small groups ("primitive hordes"). The first implements used by man were rough-chipped stones. People obtained their food in common by gathering snails, insects, fruit and edible roots. The hunting of small animals was still a casual pursuit Because of the warm climate man had no need for the protection of special shelters or clothing.



Ancient flint tools. Paleolithic.
*Implements found in the lowest stratum of the cave of Kiik Koba, Crimea*

Gradually the climate hardened and grew still more humid. Large glaciers formed in the north, and moved down the mountains. The luxuriant forests receded farther south, and the warm-climate animals either went south with them, or vanished completely. Vast areas were under ice.

Man however remained and adapted himself to the harsher climatic conditions inasmuch as he had learned the use of fire. At first he learned how to keep up a fire, and then how to obtain it by rubbing dry sticks together and by striking sparks out of stone. Fire kept man warm, protected him against wild beasts, and allowed him to eat his meat and fish cooked.

The earliest squatting places of man in our country are those discovered in the Caucasus (near Sukhumi) and in the Crimea. A large number of split animal bones and rude stone implements have been found in caves not far from Simferopol. These were the dwellings of primitive hunters who used natural caves as protection against beasts and as shelter in time of bad weather.

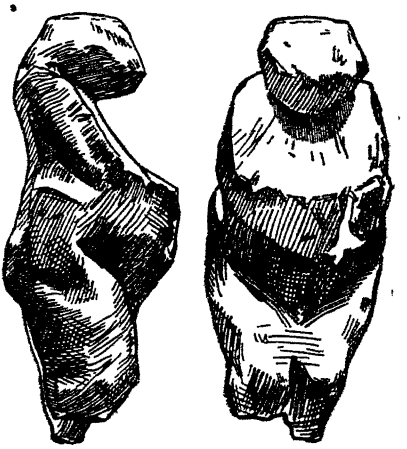
When the Glacial Age was at its height, a large cap of ice covered the European territory of our country, extending to the Middle Don and the Southern Dnieper (almost to Dniepropetrovsk). The ice cap over Siberia was less considerable.

This blanket of ice covered our land for many tens of thousands of years. The glaciers melted slowly and the ice gradually receded to the north, leaving behind it ridges of boulders.

At first the land freed from the glaciers was covered with tundra. Torrents of thawing ice cut channels into the soil and formed the

river systems. The abundance of moisture stimulated the rapid growth of grass and forests. The plains, woods, riverbanks, lake shores, etc., became the abode of large animals—the mammoth and rhinoceros, as well as the reindeer and other specimens of the northern and Arctic animal world. Man's most dangerous enemies—the cave lion, cave bear and cave hyena—inhabited the hills and caves.

Man followed the retreating glaciers to the north.



Earliest images of woman, the guardian of the tribe and clan. Statuettes of hard chalk. *Kostenki, near Voronezh*

**The Primitive Community.** Equipped only with the wooden club, the wooden spear and the crudest stone implements man was unable to combat the rigorous conditions of nature and the wild beasts singlehanded. Danger dogged him at every step. Only by helping each other could men protect themselves against the attacks of beasts and obtain the food they needed. This co-operation was especially necessary when hunting big game like the mammoth, rhinoceros, the wild bull and other beasts. In appearance the mammoth resembled the elephant, but was much larger and stronger. The mammoth's chief means of defence were his enormous upcurving tusks.

The mammoth was a herbivorous animal and dangerous only when being pursued. To capture such a strong beast people had to set traps or to lie in wait for their quarry near watering places or steep cliffs.

Collective life led to the formation of the primitive community. Everything, with the exception of some insignificant articles, belonged to the community; private property did not yet exist. In the primitive community there were no rich and poor, no exploitation of man by man. Productive forces were very poorly developed.

People learned to make mud-huts and hovels as a shelter from the cold. Not long ago the remains of such a dwelling place were discovered on the Don, near the village of Gagarino. The bottom of the hut was a shallow, oval pit the sides of which were lined with boulders and large bones, to which poles were affixed, joined together at the top and forming a roof covered with twigs and hides. The bones of the mammoth, rhinoceros, bull and various small animals were found

scattered inside the hut. Ornaments were also discovered there—the teeth of small beasts of prey, shells, and several carved bone figures of women.

With the development of Soviet archeology as many as 200 habitats of ancient human society have been discovered on Soviet land. They are scattered in various places in the southern half of the European territory, in the Altai Mountains and in Western and Eastern Siberia, and are evidence of the profound antiquity of human society in our country.

## 2. THE MATRIARCHAL CLAN

**Origin of the Matriarchal Clan.** As the climate changed, the vast glaciers vanished. They remained only in the extreme north and on mountain peaks. Gradually the conditions of nature became more like what they are today. The animal world changed; many large beasts, such as the mammoth and the cave lion, became extinct. Man's struggle for existence was considerably mitigated.

The primitive community had had no definite social organization and readily disintegrated. On the other hand, the existence of a common economy called for a more stable and permanent social organization.

In the course of many thousands of years people handed down from generation to generation acquired labour habits. They learned to make implements of various sizes and shape from flint and bone, such as axes, hammers, knives, celts, picks, spear points, etc. They started polishing the surfaces of the stone implements, making them easier to handle. People learned to sharpen and pierce stones and fix them onto handles. Of great importance was the appearance of the bow and arrow which enabled the hunter to kill his quarry from afar.

His new production technique enabled man to rise to a higher stage of human civilization, that of barbarism. Man began to make earthenware, which was necessary for storing water, especially in dry regions. At first, the utensils were made of wood, twigs and skins. Then, to make them more durable, the walls of the wooden vessels were lined with clay. Still later the entire vessel was made of clay alone. Finally, the potter's wheel appeared, and with it pottery production. The plaiting of baskets from twigs and rushes anticipated the weaving of the fibre of wild plants. This was the beginning of textile production. Coarse, hand-woven fabric was used for clothing, bags, and the like. Man's vocations became more intricate and diverse. He began to use nets woven of fibre for fishing. His chief hunting weapons were the spear, the harpoon, and the bow and arrow. During their excavations archeologists sometimes find the bones of large beasts of prey with flint arrowheads deeply imbedded in them.

At first women gathered fruit and berries; then they began planting grain, tubers and edible roots. For this purpose a plot of fertile land, usually in a river valley, was loosened by means of a pointed stick—the hoe. Barley, millet and wheat were sown. In this way arose the primitive form of hoe agriculture.

Primitive agriculture, which was carried on chiefly by the women, provided mankind with a more stable economic basis. Gradually, in the course of centuries, primitive people began to revere woman as the symbol of fertility. Realizing the importance of maternity, they also honoured woman as the ancestral Mother. And woman, as the Mother, tiller of the soil, and guardian of the collective life of the group, became head of the primitive matriarchal clan.

When a man took a wife, he went to live with her clan, where he was subordinate to his wife's mother. At clan meetings, woman, the Mother, was in command, and members of the clan honoured only their female ancestors For the murder of or insult to one of their kin, the entire clan sought revenge. Inter-clan blood feuds became endless wars. For purposes of war several clans joined to form tribes. Clans consisted of several hundred people, and were united chiefly for work. A tribe combined a number of clans comprising several thousand people, who primarily formed a military group. At tribal meetings the armed people—men and women—elected leaders and elders, and decided questions of war and peace. Women were also tribal chieftains.

The men, who were hunters, tamed wild animals. This laid the foundation for animal herding. The first domestic animal was the dog. In northern regions man tamed the reindeer.

**Habitations of Clan Communities.** Many dwelling places of clan communities have been found all over our country, from the shores of the Black Sea and the valleys of the Transcaucasian Mountains to the Far North, and from Byelorussia to Eastern Siberia. This material has enabled scientists to determine how people lived in that remote epoch.

In the forest belt people lived along riverbanks and lake shores. Each settlement belonged to a single clan and consisted of a few hovels. The dwellers' chief occupation was fishing, and to some extent hunting. In some places clan settlements were located in groups, a fact that points to the rise of a tribal union of clans.

In the south, where the country consisted of mixed forest and steppeland, and especially in the fertile river valleys, the chief occupation of the population was tilling the ground with the hoe. As an example of a primitive agricultural society we have the Tripolye civilization, relics of which were first discovered near the village of Tripolye (not far from Kiev). Numerous settlements of the Tripolye civilization have been found on Ukrainian territory, west of the Dnieper; they are said to be about 6,000 years old.

Settlements were located on high banks or on the slopes of ravines at the bottom of which streams flowed. The site selected for a dwelling was spread with clay which was baked hard with the help of bonfires. The walls were built of piles and sticks coated with clay. The result was a fairly spacious dwelling with several hearths inside. These crudely constructed houses accommodated up to a hundred and more people. The people planted wheat, barley and millet not far from their place of abode. Wooden flint-tipped hoes were used to turn up the soil. The grain was ground between large stone slabs.

A large number of clay statuettes of animals have been found; a magical power was presumably ascribed to these statuettes which were supposed to protect the domestic herd and help it to multiply. Pictures of domestic animals are also to be found on vessels.

Occasionally articles made of copper are found in the villages of the Tripolye civilization. Little casting moulds have been unearthed, pointing to the fact that some of these articles were made at the place where they were found. The frequent occurrence of metallic objects coincides with the period when the matriarchal clan system began to decline

### 3. THE PATRIARCHAL CLAN

**The Development of Herding.** The domestication of wild animals was of great importance in the life of the clan communities. Possessing domestic animals, people had a constant supply of food and were no longer dependent on the outcome of their hunt, which was not always a success. The taming of dogs and reindeer (in the north) was followed by the domestication of other animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, swine and horses. Gradually herding became the chief pursuit of the community. At first the cattle lived all year by grazing near the settlement. Later the people began to make hay as fodder for the winter; in the north thin leafy twigs were dried and shredded for this purpose. During the winter domestic animals lived in the same houses with the people. Later special sheds were put up for the animals. Large herds of cattle could not remain in one place for a great length of time. People therefore began to migrate with their cattle in search of fresh pasturage. Thus, nomad herding originated in the vast steppeland. Dairy farming, and the making of cheese and butter appeared with the development of cattle raising Man learned to treat the wool of animals and to spin thread from it, then he began to make warm fabrics which were a good protection against the cold. Later the weaving loom was invented.

The breeding of domestic animals enabled man to use them in turning up the soil. This led to the appearance of the first tilling

implement—the wooden plough. The first primitive plough was probably a tree limb with a bent, pointed bough or rhizome.

**Origin of the Patriarchal Clan.** Herding was the chief occupation of the man. It greatly enhanced his importance in the community. Man, the livestock breeder, replaced woman in agriculture. he tilled the land with the aid of animals (the bull, deer and horse) and freed woman from heavy physical labour with the hoe or plough. By using draft animals, man transformed hoe agriculture into plough farming Kinship began to be traced from the male line, and no longer from the female. The matriarchal clan, which had existed heretofore, disappeared, and was replaced by the patriarchal clan, that is, a union of relatives who originated from a common male ancestor.

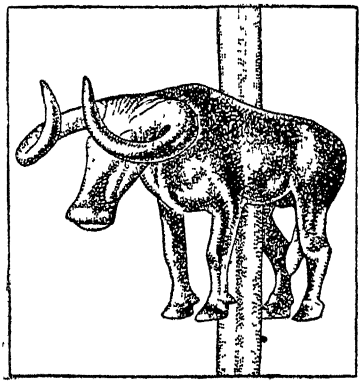
It became the established custom for a man's children to inherit their father's property, and this led to the accumulation of wealth in the family. Rich families began to withdraw from the clan. This accelerated the disintegration of the primitive community system.

**Development of Copper and Bronze Age Culture.** The development of the patriarchal clan was coeval with the period when stone implements began to give way to copper and bronze tools. Native copper was worked in the cold state. However, implements made of pure copper were too soft, they easily bent and soon got blunt. The discovery of bronze, a copper and tin alloy, was of great importance in improving the quality of metal implements. Bronze melts at a lower temperature than copper. This facilitated the smelting and manufacture of bronze implements. The use of bronze, which is much harder than copper, permitted of a considerable improvement in tools and weapons, with the result that man's labour became more productive and his weapons stronger.

The most ancient copper articles found on the territory of the U.S.S.R. date back to 3,000 B.C. They were originally introduced from southern and eastern lands. Local production came into being no later than 2,000 B.C The mountains of the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Altai and the Urals became seats of the Bronze Age civilization. From here the use of bronze implements spread to the steppe and forest regions.

In early times, when hunting was man's chief occupation, life in the different primitive communities was practically unvaried. Later occupations became more diversified. In forest localities which abounded in wild animals, hunting was still an important pursuit. Near rivers and lakes people turned chiefly to fishing, while in fertile river valleys they tilled the soil. The grassy steppe served as pasturage for their herds.

The inhabitants of the European forest belts and the vast wooded areas of Siberia remained preeminently hunters and fishermen. They



Golden figure of bull.
*Maikop barrow (North Caucasus)*

lived in small villages far removed from each other. The primitive community system still prevailed there.

In the grassy plains of Southern Siberia, Central Asia and the Black Sea region, herding became the basic occupation. Agriculture predominated in the fertile valleys. Here the disintegration of the primitive community proceeded more rapidly. Communities of husbandmen and herders developed more quickly than communities of hunters.

Numerous tumuli are scattered throughout the Southern Black Sea steppes, which, when excavated, revealed human skeletons dyed a red colour. During burial, the dead body was covered with ochre or minium (red lead), which later settled in the bones. The dead man's weapons and various household chattels were placed beside him. Sometimes the skeletons of a man and a woman were found together in the same burial mound. It is to be presumed that when a man, the head of a family, died, his wife was killed and buried with him. The barrows reveal that there were rich and poor burials, and testify to the incidence of inequality in property status. An example of an especially lavish burial—that of a clan or a tribal chief—is the tumulus discovered near the city of Maikop The mound was about 30 feet high. The main section of the sepulchre contained a skeleton which had been coloured a bright red with minium. The deceased was dressed in clothing ornamented with golden images of bulls, rings, rosettes, and also with gold, cornelian and turquoise beads, and other small objects. Gold and silver vessels lay beside him. A canopy had been erected above the body, and was supported on gold and silver tubular piles decorated with solid gold and silver figures of bulls. The grave contained two other skeletons in special sections, the chieftain's nearest relatives had to die with him.

The Bronze Age flourished during the second millennium and the beginning of the first millennium B C. in the mountains of the Caucasus, Transcaucasia and the Altai. Ancient mines from which ore was obtained for the local production of bronze, have been discovered in many places.

**Beginning of the Iron Age.** Iron objects appeared on the territory of the U.S.S.R. at the end of the second millennium B.C. At first

iron was used to ornament bronze articles. In the first half of the first millennium B.C. the production of iron implements had already originated in various places, and these articles began to replace bronze weapons and tools. By the middle of the first millennium B.C. iron had firmly established itself in the life of the population of our country. It increased the productivity of labour tremendously, especially in agriculture and the crafts. "Iron made possible agriculture on a larger scale and the clearing of extensive forest tracts for cultivation; it gave the craftsman a tool of such hardness and sharpness that no stone, no other known metal, could withstand it."*

The beginning of the first millennium B.C. witnessed the birth of a class society in the southern mountains of Transcaucasia and in Asia Minor. The iron ploughshare and the iron ax brought about the decline of the primitive community system.

## *Chapter II*

# EARLIEST STATES ON THE TERRITORY OF OUR COUNTRY

### 4. EARLIEST SLAVEOWNING STATES IN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

**Basis of Slavery.** In the primitive community oppression did not exist. But production, too, was in an embryonic state. With the development of herding, agriculture and domestic crafts, men were able to produce more than was necessary for their own subsistence This led to the accumulation of stocks and the bartering of products among the clan communities. With the development of private family ownership of the means of production, individual families also engaged in inter-family barter. Such barter further stimulated production, which could no longer be maintained by the labour power of a single family or clan.

Wars furnished a new source of labour power: prisoners of war were no longer killed, but were converted into slaves. War was now waged for the sake of capturing prisoners no less than for that of plunder. Wars still further increased property inequality. The rich could now enslave not only people of alien tribes, but also their own tribesmen and clansmen Thus arose a division of society into classes: a class of slaveowners and a class of slaves. The slaveowner considered his

* Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Eng. ed., Moscow, 1940, p. 134.

slaves his absolute property, just as he did any other article that belonged to him. He could sell, buy and kill his slave just as he did his cattle. A slave had no property of his own. His labour was extensively employed in the economy. The condition of slaves was a very wretched one, yet compared to the primitive community, the system of slavery was a progressive stage.

**Formation of the Slaveowning State.** The state came into being with the development of property and class inequality. It was essential to the propertied class as a means of preserving amassed riches and maintaining its power over the slaves and the indigent population. The body politic arose on the ruins of the primitive community system.

With the appearance of property inequality, clan and tribal chieftains came to be elected from among the rich families. Wars of plunder enriched these chieftains still further and made them more powerful; with them their military retinues also enriched themselves. These retinues helped to make the rule of the chiefs hereditary. A special armed force, one which replaced the former tribal volunteer levy, was required to keep the slaves and the poor in subjection. Popular justice was replaced by a new court of law, one which served the interests of the ruling minority. In the clan, society had been governed according to traditional customs. Laws that protected the interests of the slaveowners appeared in the slaveowning state. A state power unknown under the primitive community system was formed in this manner.

Ancient states expanded by subjugating weaker neighbouring tribes. Such multi-tribal states were unstable since they were founded not on economic ties but on the power of the conqueror. They therefore united or fell apart according to the success or failure of one or another military leader or ruler.

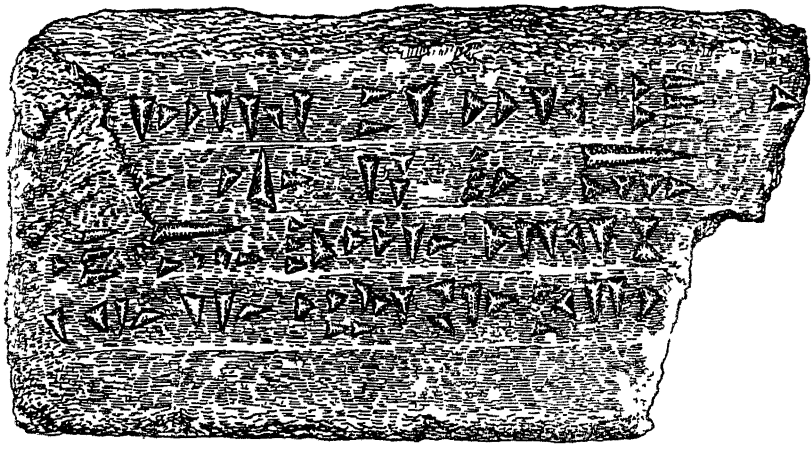
**Ancient Transcaucasian States.** The first slaveowning state to appear on the territory of our country originated in Transcaucasia near Assyria. In the middle of the second millennium B.C. the mountainous land in the region of the triple lakes, Van, Sevan and Urmiya, and the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and their tributaries, was occupied by small tribal unions. The Assyrian kings undertook frequent campaigns against them. This country of the triple lakes was named Urartu (Urardhu) by the Assyrian kings.

In the beginning of the first millennium B.C. the small principalities of Urartu united under the supremacy of the stronger tribes. The united tribes, called Chaldeans—after the name of their god, Chaldu (Khaldu)—formed a kingdom headed by powerful rulers, who not only effectively repelled the attacks of the Assyrians, but themselves launched campaigns against them. A capital which was well protected in the south by the Iranian Mountain Range was built on the shore of Lake Van (near the present city of Van). During the

9th-8th centuries before our era the dominions of Urartu expanded tremendously.

To commemorate their victories the kings of Urartu left cuneiform inscriptions on rocks and cliffs, which were sometimes located in very inaccessible places. These writings, telling of important events in the history of Urartu, have been deciphered with great difficulty by Russian and foreign scientists.

The kingdom of Urartu attained its maximum size and power in the middle of the 8th century B.C. In the north the Chaldeans seized the valley of the Araxes River and went as far as the Great Caucasian Mountain Range. During their successful campaigns against their neighbours, the Chaldeans destroyed settlements and forts, carried off rich spoils and herds, and either slew the inhabitants or captured and made them slaves. King Argishti, in an inscription engraved on a cliff at Van, records the massacre and enslaving of over 64,000 people effected by him in a single campaign. Thousands of slaves dug canals, were employed in economy, and built impregnable castles on high cliffs on the domains belonging to the king of Urartu and his lords. The buildings were erected without the use of mortar, merely by pressing stones tightly against each other. Spacious dwellings were also hewn out of stone cliffs. This demanded a tremendous expenditure of labour. The intricate water supply and irrigation systems were amazing engineering feats. The canal which supplied drinking water to the capital, Van, remained in use for over two thousand years.



Stone slab with cuneiform inscription by King Argishti, Urartu. Ruins of a fortress near Yerevan *Historical Museum (Moscow)*. Translation of inscription: "Argishti, son of Menuas, erected this fortress out of 10,000 such stones"

Grain and grape vines were cultivated in the irrigated regions and river valleys. Livestock breeding was of great economic importance. The Chaldeans were noted for their excellent bronze weapons and other bronze articles. Urartu was a state of slaveowners, the population being divided into freemen and slaves. The richest slaveowners were the king and his chief courtiers.

At the end of the 8th century B.C. the power of Urartu began noticeably to wane. Nomads from the north pressed the Chaldeans hard. The Assyrian empire on the Tigris grew strong again. Sargon, the Assyrian king, routed the troops of the Urartu ruler, destroyed his capital, and carried off tremendous booty. Sargon carved the following inscription on a cliff as a record of his victory: "When the king of Urartu learned of the defeat of his troops, his heart quivered with fear, as the heart of a bird fleeing from an eagle."

In the middle of the 6th century B.C. the Persian kingdom lying southeast of Urartu grew in power. The Chaldean tribes were weakened by their struggle against it. Their union under the rule of the Urartu kings had begun to disintegrate. The very name, Chaldean, fell into disuse; Urartu was retained in the name Mt. Ararat.

New tribal unions were formed on the former territory of Urartu in the 6th century B.C., which later developed into two nations—the Georgians and Armenians. The ancient Armenians lived on the land around Lake Van. The Karthveli (Karthli) and other kindred tribes who lived in the valleys of the Araxes and Kura rivers and the adjacent mountainous regions formed the Georgian people. At the end of the 6th century B.C. Armenia was compelled to submit to the rule of the Persian king, Darius I Hystaspes. Darius has left a lengthy inscription about his conquests, in which he describes how the Armenians rose up in rebellion against him, and how this rebellion was crushed only after five bloody engagements. Armenia had to pay heavy tribute to the Persian king.

**Ancient Peoples of Central Asia.** In the first millennium B.C. the vast steppes of Central Asia were inhabited by numerous nomad tribes of herdsmen. According to the Greeks, these people were noted for their warlike spirit and bravery. All their weapons—arrows, spears, swords, axes—were made exclusively of copper and bronze. Women enjoyed great freedom and even took command in time of war.

In the fertile river valleys the population engaged in agriculture. Among the agricultural people the clan system had already begun to disintegrate. Husbandry was carried on by a large patriarchal family which also included the slaves. Slave labour was used for the building of artificial reservoirs and canals, which were of great importance in arid areas. The most important agricultural regions were Khoresm (Khwarizm) along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya, and Sogdiana on the Zeravshan River.

Caravan routes crossed Central Asia, connecting the Caspian countries with Eastern Asia. The towns situated along these routes plied an active trade. The largest of these towns was Marakanda (now called Samarkand), the principal city of Sogdiana.

**Campaign of Alexander the Great in Central Asia.** In the 4th century B.C. Greece and Persia contended for world supremacy Alexander, king of Macedonia, invaded Asia Minor, Iraq and Persia. He dreamed of conquering India. He defeated the army of the last Persian king, Darius III, and in the spring of the year 329 B.C. crossed the Hindu Kush Mountains and descended to the Central Asiatic plain, attracted by its natural resources and large population.

The inhabitants of Sogdiana desperately resisted the Macedonians. Taking advantage of Alexander's absence—he had set off for Syr Darya with the bulk of his forces—the rebellious population, led by Spitamen, massacred the Macedonian garrisons in the towns. Alexander the Great hastily returned to Sogdiana and devastated the land wantonly. However, in spite of their fearful losses, the people continued to resist. Spitamen, with detachments of horsemen, made unexpected sallies against the Macedonians and kept them in a state of constant alarm. After a protracted struggle, the Macedonians succeeded in routing Spitamen, who then retired to the steppes with the nomads who had been his allies. The nomads, however, fearing the Macedonians' vengeance murdered Spitamen and sent his head to Alexander. Thus did this outstanding leader of the Sogdians meet his end.

Having completed the conquest of Central Asia Alexander the Great marched against India. He died in the year 323 B.C., while he was preparing for new conquests.

Following the death of Alexander the Great his empire, which consisted of a large number of conquered lands in no way united among themselves, fell apart. Several independent states, headed by the descendants of Macedonian generals, were formed on the territory conquered by Alexander. Greek (Hellenic) culture began to penetrate into the East after its conquest by Alexander. Greek warriors paved the way for merchants and craftsmen. Commerce between the Eastern countries and Greece increased. Greek art considerably influenced the art of the Eastern peoples. For this reason the Eastern states formed as a result of Alexander the Great's conquests are called "Hellenic."

The state of the Seleucids (named after one of Alexander's generals, Seleucus) was founded in Syria. It subjugated Transcaucasia including Georgia and Armenia, and part of Central Asia including Sogdiana. Gradually the population of these lands threw off the yoke of the Seleucid state.

In the 3rd century B.C., Bactria became an independent state. Bactria (the territory of modern Tajikistan) was a flourishing slave-



Coin with head of King Tigranes II of Armenia. *British Museum (London)*

owning state at that period, and at various times included separate parts of Sogdiana, Ferghana, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Northwestern India.

Bactria maintained intercourse with Siberia, which supplied gold to Central Asia, and with the Urals, where metal was mined. It also had ties with China, to which country a so-called "silk route" had been laid. The Bactrian kingdom reached the zenith of its development in the 2nd century B.C.

**Armenia under Tigranes II.** After the destruction of the Seleucid state by the Romans in the year 190 B.C. the Armenians rebelled against the Syrians and formed an independent slaveowning kingdom with its own dynasty of rulers. Armenia was at its greatest during the 1st century B.C. under Tigranes II, who crushed the might of the neighbouring Parthian king in Asia Minor, Persia and Turkmenia. Following this victory Tigranes II called himself the "king of kings" and even declared himself a god. He established a magnificent Eastern court at which he gave refuge to Greek philosophers and writers who had fled from Roman oppression. During his campaigns Tigranes II captured large numbers of Greeks, Jews and Arabs, and settled them in his towns. With the help of these settlers he tried to develop the crafts and trade.

Tigranes II governed the country with the help of the rich slaveowners. Slaves cultivated the lands belonging to the king, the temples and the rich nobility. Tigranes II had a large, well-organized army. If necessary he raised a popular levy of slaveowners and their people. The army was organized on the Roman system.

**Georgia and Albania.** Georgia, which comprised two large countries—Iberia and Colchis—was situated north of Armenia. Colchis was the name of a country bordering on the eastern extremity of the Black Sea famous for its auriferous sands and silver mines. East of Colchis was Iberia. The population inhabiting its mountainous regions engaged in herding and preserved the clan system. Both agriculture and horticulture were developed in the plains. Slavery was introduced here in the 1st century B.C.

Albania was located on the western shore of the Caspian Sea. The mountainous regions and lowlands of Albania were inhabited by numerous small tribes, which were ruled by their respective petty princes. These tribes often attacked their neighbours, the Iberians

(Georgians) and Armenians. Later they united under the supremacy of the strongest tribe, the Albanians. Subsequently the descendants of the people of ancient Albania were incorporated into the Azerbaijan nation.

## 5. PEOPLES OF NORTHERN BLACK SEA REGION

**Scythians.** The people occupying the steppeland from the Volga to the Dniester in the 8th-3rd centuries B.C. consisted of various tribes including cultivators and nomad herdsmen, who bore the common name of Scythians.

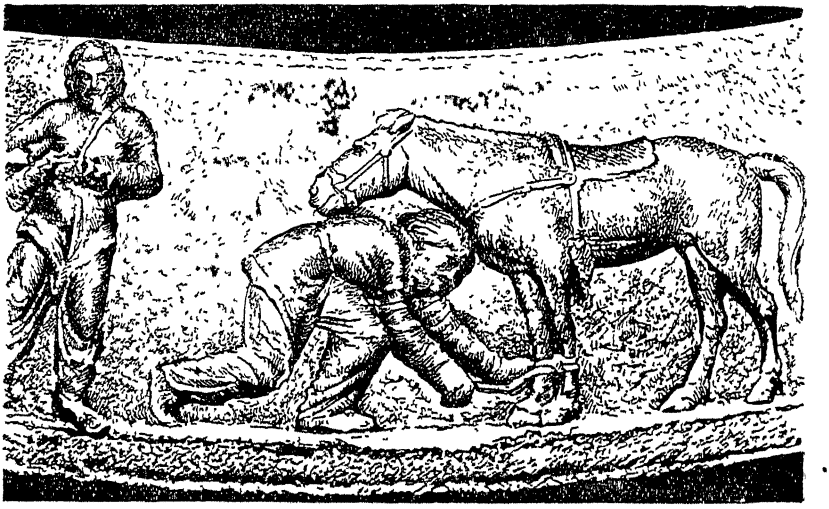


Silver vase from Chertomlyk barrow, near Nikopol, Southern Ukraine. *Hermitage (Leningrad)*

We find descriptions of the life of the Scythian nomads in the accounts of Greek writers. All the property a Scythian possessed was contained in a four-wheeled or six-wheeled nomad *kibitka*—a waggon with a felt tilt drawn by two or three yoke of oxen. Each *kibitka* was a sort of little felt home in which the women and children lived. The Scythians roamed with their herds of horses, sheep and cattle, remaining in a given spot as long as there was sufficient pasturage for their cattle. Then they would leave in search of pasture land. Among the masses of nomads was a rich ruling nobility which possessed large herds that were tended by slaves.

The Scythians were remarkable for their martial spirit and power of endurance, for their daring, and their cruelty to the enemy. They made wine-cups from the skulls of the people they killed, and quivers from their skin. A brave warrior was accorded the greatest honour. The Scythians held annual feasts at which only those who had slain one or more of the enemy were permitted to take a draught of wine from the common goblet.

Every tribe had its king who was vested with great power. When a king died, his body was placed on a cart which was drawn throughout the entire land. The inhabitants who met the body of the king had to express profound grief: they cut their hair short, cut off part of an ear,



Scythian hobbling a horse. *Detail on Chertomlyk vase*

scratched their faces, pierced their left hand with arrows. Kings were buried in huge barrows. With them were laid their arms, precious gold and silver vessels, and a large number of horses. Their wives and servants were also killed and buried with them.

Scythian tombs, some of which rise to a height of 30-35 feet are extant in the south of our country. Many of them have been excavated and a large number of interesting objects found in them are now on display in our museums.

In the large Chertomlyk barrow (not far from the city of Nikopol on the Dnieper) a wonderful silver vase was discovered, with a frieze showing scenes of nomad life and Scythians breaking in wild mares. One section depicts two horses grazing freely in the steppe, in another scene some Scythians are having a hard time holding down a wild horse they have captured; in a third, three Scythians are trying to throw a horse to the ground. Then there is a picture of the horse after it had been tamed; a stooping Scythian is hobbling its forelegs.

Of no less interest is a gold vase found in a barrow near Kerch (on the Kul-Oba Hill). One of the scenes pictures a seated Scythian, evidently a chief, listening to a tale or a warrior's report. The chief's long hair is tied with a headband. His clothing consists of a short kaftan confined by a belt, and loose, Turkish-like trousers. The chief is leaning on a long spear with both hands. A warrior is kneeling before the king.

Another picture on the vase shows a Scythian fitting a string to his bow. Some other Scythian is treating the tooth of a third person. Still another picture portrays a Scythian bandaging someone's diseased or injured leg. Several of the Scythians are wearing tall pointed hoods on their heads. All of them have quivers of arrows and cases for bows slung at their side.



Golden vase from Kul-Oba near Kerch Crimea.
*Hermitage (Leningrad)*

A golden comb, which apparently belonged to some Scythian king, was found in one of the barrows (Solokha). The upper part of the comb has a scene on it picturing a combat between three warriors: two foot soldiers (one of whom is undoubtedly a Scythian) are attacking a Greek horseman. Thus has an episode of the Scythian people's struggle for independence from the Greek enslavers been preserved for history.

**Greek Colonization of the Black Sea Coast.** Greek slaveowners went to the Black Sea region in quest of slaves, and were also lured to that territory by its riches. They had heard that the Scythians possessed large herds of cattle and a great amount of grain, and also that there was gold in the Caucasus. Accounts of the Black Sea region have been preserved in Greek legends about the golden fleece, the adventures of Odysseus and others. The first Greeks to visit these shores were fishermen and tradesmen who bartered with the local inhabitants. Beginning with the 7th century B.C. permanent Greek colonies sprang up on the shores of the Black Sea. On the estuary of the Southern Bug and Dnieper arose the colony of Olvia; not far from modern Sevastopol was Khersones, and on the southeastern shore of the Crimea—

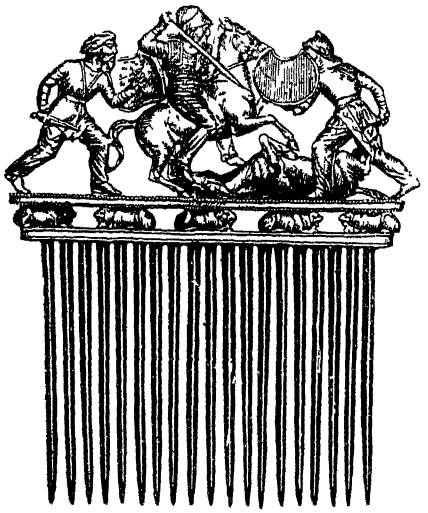


Scythian fitting a bow-string.
*Detail on Kul-Oba vase*

Feodosia and Panticapaeum (now Kerch). The city of Tanais was built at the mouth of the Don by the Sea of Azov; Greek colonies also arose on the Caucasian coast.

The centre of each Greek colony was a city surrounded by a stone wall. This wall protected the Greek colonists from attack by the hostile population. Within the city wall were dwellings, stores and various public buildings, such as the temples and baths. Among these structures were some splendid works of Greek architecture, ornamented with marble columns and statues

Trade with Greece, with Eastern lands and the peoples of Eastern Europe was of great importance for the Greek colonies on the shores of the Black Sea. Vessels sailing for Greece were loaded with grain, slaves, furs and fish, while Greece exported weapons, fabrics, various utensils of clay and glass, costly ornaments and articles of luxury, and wine. Part of these imported goods went to satisfy the needs of the upper class of the local Greek population; part was exchanged for grain and other products supplied by the population of the northern Black Sea coast. Later the Greek cities developed their own crafts. Many of the articles found in the Scythian barrows were made in the workshops of the Black Sea colonies. The free Greek population in the colonies, as in Greece itself, met at "popular assemblies" to discuss various questions and to elect their functionaries. The entire administration was in the hands of the rich slaveowners and merchants.



Golden comb picturing Scythian warriors in combat with Greek horseman *From Solokha barrow. Hermitage (Leningrad)*

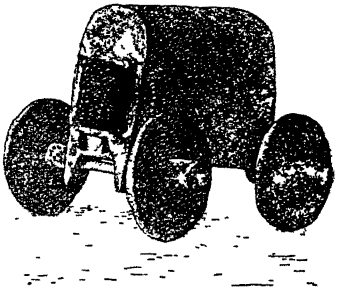
Every city-colony constituted a separate state. One such city, Panticapaeum, ruled a considerable territory, the so-called Bosporus kingdom. It was governed both by Greek and Scythian slaveowners, whose power was passed by inheritance from father to son.

At the end of the 3rd century B.C. the condition of the Greek colonies along the Black Sea shore deteriorated. Tribes of nomads, Sarmatae, who were kin to the Scythians appeared on the Caspian steppes. Harassed by the Sarmatae, some of the Scythians, and other nomads moved westward and reached the Danube; others went to the

Crimea and occupied its northern steppes.

The Scythians who remained were assimilated by the Sarmatae and other tribes. The Greek cities found increasing difficulty in repulsing the attacks of the nomads.

The Scythians who settled in the Crimea during the 2nd century B.C. often attacked Khersones and the Bosporus kingdom. At this time a Pontic kingdom was formed in Asia Minor, on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Khersones, which was not strong enough to defend itself, concluded a treaty with the king of Pontus, by which it was to receive help.



Scythian waggon.
*Clay toy from a Scythian barrow*

**Slave Revolt in the Crimea.** At the end of the 2nd century B. C. the Scythian slaves in the Bosporus kingdom rose in revolt. A slave of the Bosporus king, named Saumacus, slew the king and headed the uprising. The revolt was crushed by Diophantus, a general of King Mithridates VI of Pontus, who had come to Khersones to defend it against the Scythians. He captured Saumacus and sent him to Mithridates in Asia Minor. As a sign of their gratitude for the help rendered against the Scythians, the rulers of Khersones erected a bronze statue of Diophantus in the acropolis of the city near the altar of their most revered goddess. An inscription telling of the services and victories of Diophantus was carved on the marble pedestal. The inscription was found among the ruins of Khersones.

The uprising of the slaves in the Crimea was not an isolated instance. Similar mass rebellions of slaves occurred in the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. in many other slaveowning states—in Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, on the Island of Sicily and other places These rebellions portended the end of the slaveowning system.



Coin with head of Saumacus.
Second-first centuries B.C.
*Historical Museum (Moscow)*

**Roman Conquests in the Black Sea Region.** During the

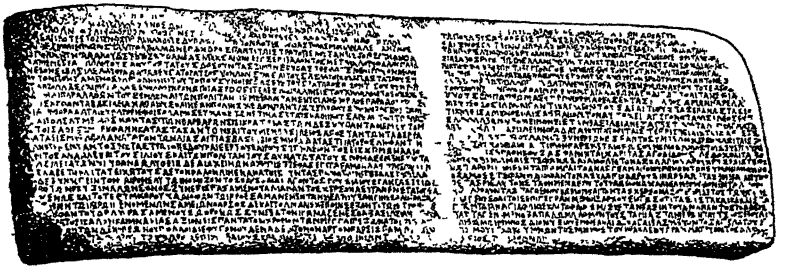
1st century B. C. Roman dominions rapidly spread eastward. In order to conquer Asia Minor Rome had to destroy the kingdoms of Pontus and Armenia. The struggle between Rome and King Mithridates VI of Pontus lasted almost 18 years. Finally, the Roman legions inflicted a serious defeat on Mithridates. Roman slaveowners invaded the domains of Tigranes II. They sacked the rich capital of Armenia (the city of Tigranocerta on the Tigris River). The people rose in defence of their land and inflicted a series of defeats upon the Romans. Other legions under Pompey were then sent against Tigranes II. Georgians, Medes and other peoples joined the Armenians against the Romans. Pompey took advantage of dissension among the Armenian nobility and forced Tigranes II to conclude peace. The Armenian king was named the "friend and ally of the Roman people," a title which signified the subordination of Armenia to Rome. Subsequently the Romans subjugated a considerable part of Georgia.

During the 1st century B.C. the Romans established themselves firmly in the Black Sea region. The kings of Bosporus became the vassals of the Roman emperors and submissively executed all their orders Roman legions were quartered in Khersones and other Greek cities of the Crimea and the Caucasus. Roman fortresses with towers from which the approach of enemy vessels could be observed, were built along the shore of the Black Sea.

The kings of Bosporus began to use the names of Roman emperors and to wear Roman clothing. They received their insignia of royalty from Rome: the sceptre with an image of the emperor and the royal crown. Throughout the century-long existence of the Greek colonies, the descendants of the former colonists intermingled with the local population. Alien people of various tribes made their home in the Black Sea towns and became local citizens In the Crimea, too, there was a mingling of different peoples and cultures

With the decline of the Roman empire, its influence in the Black Sea countries decreased still further. By the 3rd century A. D. the Roman fortresses in the Crimea and along the Caucasian shore became desolated. The former Greek cities became independent once again. A new union of tribes, known as the Goths, was formed on the southern steppes of the Black Sea region in the 3rd century. This union also included the eastern Germans, who had formerly inhabited the lower reaches of the Vistula. Towards the middle of the 3rd century the Goths began to invade Roman dominions beyond the Danube. At the same time Goth pirates plundered the Caucasian and Asia Minor coasts of the Black Sea and penetrated to the Aegean Sea, burning Greek towns. In the 4th century the Goths were severely defeated by the Romans.

The attack of the Goths upon Rome's eastern possessions marked the beginning of the struggle of various East European tribes against the Romans. During the same period a struggle was being waged in



Decree of the National Assembly of Khersones in honour of Diophantus engraved on marble. Second-first centuries B.C. *Hermitage (Leningrad)*

Western Europe between the Romans and the German tribes. The attacks of the "barbarians" (non-Romans) hastened the downfall of the slaveowning Roman empire.

## 6. NOMADS OF ASIA

## (From the 3rd century B.C. to the 8th century A.D.)

The vast steppes of Southern Siberia and Central Asia were inhabited by various tribes of nomads that later formed the Turkic and Mongolian peoples. Several centuries before our era the nomads living north of China formed a large tribal union. The Chinese called the nomads belonging to this union Huns. The Chinese waged an arduous struggle against the Huns, which lasted for centuries. The nomads made sudden raids on China's northern territories, sacked the towns, ruined the harvest and carried off the population. When a large Chinese army was rallied, the nomads returned to the steppe and dispersed over its boundless expanses.

In order to defend their frontiers the Chinese, as far back as the 3rd century B.C., constructed solid stone fortifications which became known as the "Great Wall of China." Gradually Chinese influence made itself felt among the nomads. The Hun chief assumed the title of "born of heavens and the earth, the chosen of the sun and the moon." The Hun princes sent their sons to serve at the court of the Chinese emperor.

The nomad ruling caste adopted Chinese customs and Chinese clothing. A Soviet expedition to Northern Mongolia, headed by P.K. Kozlov, which explored the exceedingly rich barrows of the Hun rulers, discovered chariots, Chinese silks, a magnificent rug picturing a

winged animal tearing an elk apart, precious objects, parasols which were symbols of high honour, and other objects.

The great Hun state decayed in the 1st century B.C. A large number of Huns moved westward. New tribes formerly under the domination of the Huns now came to the fore in the steppes of Asia.

**Invasion of Eastern Europe by the Nomads.** When the Hun state collapsed in Mongolia, some of the tribes moved westward in their attempt to escape the Chinese. Their descendants after intermingling with other peoples in the course of their roamings, appeared in Eastern Europe in the 4th century A.D. Contemporaries of the Huns called them "the fiercest warriors." Besides the Mongolian Huns, the Hun kingdom included the native population of Central Asia and the northern part of the Black Sea region.

The Huns defeated the Goths and drove them west. The main Hun horde stopped between the Danube and the Tisia. For a brief space of time there was a strong Hun state in this locality, the king of which was Attila. After his death in 453, the Hun kingdom broke up; some of the Huns settled on the right bank of the Danube and mixed with the local population; others returned to their native haunts in the Black Sea steppes, where they were ethnically assimilated by the local population.

The movement of the Huns west of the Volga along the northern shores of the Black Sea stimulated the migration of other tribes as well. Close upon the heels of the Huns, the Bulgars came to the Caspian steppes. But the Bulgars, too, were not long able to withstand the pressure of other nomads. The Bulgarian tribal union broke up into several parts. Some of these settled on the Volga (in the Bulgarian kingdom); others reached the Balkans, where they intermingled with the local Yugoslavic population, to whom it gave its ethnic name—Bulgar.

**Turkic Khanate.** A group of tribes, known as the Turkic khanate, arose in Mongolia in the 6th century A.D. The ruler of this state was called a *kaghan*. A large number of nomad and, to some extent, agricultural tribes were under the rule of this khanate. The ruling tribes under the leadership of their khan constantly raided their neighbours and spread their power over a vast territory. The rich and the nobles commanded the warrior detachments and governed the subjugated tribes. The bulk of the nomad population lived in separate clan communities.

Tombstones of Turkic khans, bearing engraved inscriptions of remarkable campaigns and outstanding events, have been preserved in the valley of the Orkhon River.

The Turkomans of the khanate were hostile to the Turkic Kirghiz (Khakass) who inhabited the upper reaches of the Yenisei River and the Altai Mountains. One of the inscriptions tells how a Turkic khan mounted his white stallion and set off with his troops against the

Kirghiz. He threw one Kirghiz off his horse. Then with a spear in his hand, he rushed into the ranks of the enemy. While doing so he dug his spurs into his white horse so violently, that he broke the horse's ribs. The Kirghiz khan was killed and the people submitted to the power of the Turkic khan.

The Turkic state in Mongolia and Central Asia collapsed in the 8th century A.D. After the fall of the Turkic khanate, the Kirghiz (Khakass), who had as many as 80,000 warriors and a large population proved to be the strongest people.

And so throughout many centuries the vast lands of Southern Siberia and Central Asia saw the continuous rise and fall of one or another tribal union. The nomads in their search for better pasturage and plunder, traversed a large section of the Central Asiatic steppes. Part of the nomads settled in the new places, others continued further west. They were drawn to those regions by the fertile, grassy plains which spread out like a heavy green blanket northwest of the Caspian Sea.

## 7 EARLY FEUDAL STATES IN TRANSCAUCASIA

**The Struggle Between Rome and Persia (Iran) for Armenia and Georgia.** Rome ceased to exist as a slaveowning empire in the 4th-5th centuries A.D. The peoples of Europe and Asia, including those of Parthia and Persia, rose against her. Persia subjugated Parthia, Albania (Azerbaijan) and a considerable part of Georgia and Armenia. Only a small part of Western Armenia and Western Georgia remained under Roman power. At the end of the 4th century the Roman empire fell apart and was divided into two empires: the Eastern and the Western. The Eastern Roman empire (Byzantium) continued its struggle against Persia for possession of Armenia and Georgia.

**The Birth of Feudalism in Armenia and Georgia.** About the middle of the 1st century A. D. the Arsacid dynasty was established in Armenia. With great solemnity the Roman Emperor, Nero, received an Armenian embassy and personally placed a crown upon the head of the Armenian king. It was approximately in the 4th century A.D., when kings of the Arsacid dynasty were in power, that feudal relations originated in Armenia. Slave labour was not very productive and even became unprofitable with the development of agriculture and the crafts and improvements in working tools. It was therefore superseded by the labour of feudal subjects. Serfs who lived on the lands of their feudal lords had their own little farms and the necessary implements. They tilled the land of the feudal lord and fulfilled other services for him. The lord could no longer kill his serf with impunity, as he had killed his slave, but he still retained the right to buy and sell serfs.

Under serfdom the peasant was interested, to a certain degree, in husbandry as a means of livelihood and to pay his lord a tax in kind, that is, with the products of his own harvest. The big landowners forced the peasants to do all the work on their estates and to render all manner of service. Every rich feudal lord had his own castle and troops. The feudal nobility seized the most important posts. The great feudal lords formed the king's court, and attended state ceremonies at which they occupied places according to seniority.

At the end of the 3rd century A. D. the Armenian king and nobility adopted Christianity from Byzantium, and it became the national religion of Armenia. Byzantium supported the Christian church, using it to strengthen her influence. The church contributed to the final establishment of feudalism in Armenia, though ancient pagan beliefs persisted for a long time among the peasant population.

In the Byzantine part of Armenia the power of the king was destroyed at the end of the 4th century, and the country was ruled by Byzantine officials appointed by the emperor. Similarly the rule of the king in that part of Armenia which was under Persian sway soon came to an end. With the termination of the king's rule the power of the large landowners was still further augmented.

Mesrob Mashtots, a monk, born of a peasant family, perfected the Armenian alphabet in the early part of the 5th century. This marked the beginning of an Armenian literature; instruction in the schools was carried on in the native language, youths were sent to Egypt and Byzantium to perfect their knowledge of the sciences. An extensive literature, both original and translated, appeared.

A kingdom was formed in Western Georgia on the territory of ancient Colchis in the 4th century A.D. This land was inhabited by ancient Georgian tribes of Lazis, whence the Romans and Greeks derived their name for the land—Lazica. The centre of this land was the fertile valley of Rion, which was covered with vineyards and orchards This valley was also the site of a considerable number of towns, including Kutaisi, which engaged in commerce. After a long struggle with Persia, Lazica remained under Byzantine rule. The Eastern Georgian lands formed part of another kingdom, Karthli (ancient Iberia). In the beginning of the 5th century the king of Karthli became a vassal of Persia. As everywhere else, the development of feudal relations in Georgia enhanced the power of the landowning nobility, which tried to limit the king's power. Christianity began to penetrate into Georgia via the cities along the Black Sea shore. With the aid of Byzantium it became firmly established as the state religion of Karthli in the middle of the 4th century, and in Lazica in the beginning of the 6th century. Christianity strengthened the cultural ties between Georgia and Byzantium. Translations of religious writings appeared simultaneously with translations of Greek

philosophical and historical works. This stimulated the growth of Georgian literature. The peoples of Transcaucasia did not cease their struggle for liberation. At the end of the 5th century the Karthlian king, Vakhtang, who was called the "Wolf's Head" because of the emblem in the form of a wolf's head on his helmet, fought against Persia. During one of the engagements he was mortally wounded. After his death the Persian feudal lords assumed power. The country was then ruled by a Persian satrap who settled in Tbilisi.

**The Struggle of the Peoples of Transcaucasia Against Persian and Byzantine Domination.** Byzantine and Persian domination in Georgia, Armenia and Albania (Azerbaijan) was accompanied by the terrible oppression and devastation of these lands. The population was brought to the point of despair by intolerable tribute and compulsory services. The conquerors conscripted the Armenian and Georgian youth into their armies. These conditions led to frequent bloody popular uprisings in Georgia, Armenia and Albania (Azerbaijan). The rebellions were notably powerful when the Georgians and Armenians joined forces against the common enemy. Filled with hatred for their enslavers, these peoples won many a victory over numerous and better armed enemy detachments. While the people fought heroically and staunchly for the liberation of their country, the rich feudal lords often turned traitors and went over to the camp of their country's enemies. This made it easier for Persia and Byzantium to crush the uprisings of the people.

**Struggle of the Peoples of Transcaucasia Against the Arabs.** Persia's rule in Armenia and Georgia lasted until the 7th century, when the Arabs, soon after reducing the Persian empire, conquered Transcaucasia and Central Asia. In 642 they seized the capital of Armenia, Dvin, and within a few years conquered all of Armenia and Eastern Georgia. In the 9th-10th centuries there was a considerable number of rich cities in Transcaucasia—Tbilisi (Tiflis), Derbent, and others, which carried on trade and the crafts and maintained intercourse with Eastern Europe. Tbilisi became the residence of the Arabian emir. The country was ruled by his *ostikans*—governors. With the arrival of the Arabs the Moslem faith spread among the people of Transcaucasia.

The peasants of Transcaucasia frequently rose in revolt against their Arabian conquerors, who were ruining the land with their exactions and turning the local population into slaves and serfs. A big uprising of peasants, craftsmen and slaves occurred in the first half of the 9th century in Azerbaijan, under the leadership of the gallant chieftain Babek. Babek was orphaned when still a child. After his father's death, when he was only 10 years old, the boy was turned over to a rich herdsman, for whom he worked as a shepherd. Later he became a camel driver. This enabled him to study the life of the

Azerbaijan people at first hand. The sufferings of these people, oppressed by heavy taxes and other exactions, aroused in Babek a feeling of irreconcilable hatred for the oppressors and enslavers, especially for the Arabian rule. Babek, who was only 18 years old at that time, joined a popular uprising and soon became its leader. Finding protection in the inaccessible, high mountain regions, Babek fought tenaciously against the Arabs. The rebels won several victories over powerful Arabian detachments.

It was only after long years of struggle that the Arabs succeeded in occupying the chief insurgent areas. Babek went into hiding in the mountains and from there he continued guerilla warfare against the Arabs and the local feudal lords who had betrayed their own people. All attempts to surround and capture Babek failed. Then one of the powerful feudal lords, pretending to be a supporter of Babek's, invited him to his castle. There Babek was treacherously seized and turned over to the Arabs. He was executed upon the order of the caliph. The uprising was suppressed. This determined struggle of the Azerbaijan people for independence lasted over twenty years.

The disintegration of the Arab caliphate, which began at the end of the 9th century, led to the restoration of the rule of the local wealthy families in Georgia and Armenia.

In 864 Ashod I, who represented one of the most powerful families of Armenia, became king of Armenia and founded a new dynasty of the Bagratids, which ruled until the middle of the 11th century. This dynasty succeeded in uniting a large part of Armenia. The city of Ani (not far from the city of Kars) became the capital of the Bagratids and the trade centre between the East and the West. The city was beautified by a number of splendid buildings which point to the flourishing state of Armenian architecture. From his study of the ruins of the city of Ani, Academician N. Marr, famous Soviet scientist, retraced the history of the language and culture of ancient Armenia.

After the fall of the Arab caliphate, Georgia broke up into a number of rival independent feudal principalities. It was only in the second half of the 10th century that one of these, the Tao-Klarzhetsk, succeeded in uniting these principalities under the power of the kings of the Georgian Bagratid dynasty.

**Armenian Epic, "David of Sasun."** The memory of the age-long struggle of the Armenian people against their conquerors, the Arabs, has come down to us in a beautiful epic poem, *David of Sasun*. It tells of the adventures and feats of four generations of Armenian knights. Two brothers built a fortress of huge stones high in the mountains which they named *Sasun* ("Wrath"). Poor people came to Sasun from all parts of the country to seek protection, and it became the bulwark of the people's struggle against the enemies of their native land. David of Sasun is the central figure of the poem. When still

a youth he fought against the Arabs, who were oppressing his people. The Arab sovereign set off with a large army against Sasun. He had so many warriors that they dried the rivers on their way by each of them merely drinking a mouthful of the water. Yet the enemy's might did not daunt David. "Brothers and sisters!" David exclaimed. "Fear not the enemy, I shall go and fight the foe for you." David mounted his father's miraculous steed and engaged the enemy in battle. He slew the enemy warriors, sparing those, however, who had been forcibly driven to war. He also slew the Arabian king and liberated the prisoners:

*I break the bonds that do enslave,*
*Return, you all, to friends and those you love so true.*
*Return, you, home, return and there your life renew,*
*Nor fees nor tribute do I crave.*

David had a son, Mger the Younger, who was as puissant and dauntless as his father. Left an orphan, Mger continued the struggle against the enemies of his native land. The poem tells how Mger stepped up to a cliff and with a powerful blow cleaved it in two. Riding his grandfather's miraculous steed, he vanished into the fissure, where he will remain until the old, unjust world is destroyed.

*As long as the world is all sin*
*As long as deceit stands to win,*
*So long do I part with this world.*
*When all is destroyed and created anew,*
*When barley grows large as the berries I knew,*
*Oh then will I welcome my day!*
*This place will I leave on that day!*

In these words of Mger the Younger the Armenian people expressed their undying dream of a better life. Centuries passed, generations changed, but the bards, from age to age, continued to sing of the knights of Sasun, of their feats in their struggle against evil, and of their great love for their native land.

## 8. PEOPLES OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ARABS

**Conquest of Central Asia by the Arabs.** At the time of the Arabian conquest Central Asia consisted of several states which were constantly at war with each other. The most important of these was Sogdiana, a land of fertile oases, rich foothills and mountain valleys. Its territory was studded with the castles of landowning princelings who were practically independent of each other. The

most powerful of them was the ruler of Samarkand, who called himself the "Sogdianian king." West of Samarkand was Bokhara. Along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya stood Khoresm.

The steppes of Central Asia were populated by nomad tribes. The incursions of Turkic tribes from the east grew more insistent. In the early part of the 8th century they tried to seize the agricultural regions of Central Asia and its rich commercial cities, but were repulsed by the Arabs.

In 751 the Arabs routed both the Turkomans and the Chinese on the banks of the Talass River and also conquered Central Asia.

The population of Sogdiana—the Sogdians, remote ancestors of the Tajiks—desperately resisted the Arab aggression. This agricultural people found an ally in the nomads, who came to their aid. It took the Arabs about 75 years to completely subjugate the lands between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Khoresm, Sogdiana, Bokhara and other Central Asiatic lands became part of the Arab caliphate in the middle of the 8th century. In most cases the Arabs permitted the local princelings to retain their lands and power, but made them their tributaries. The caliph sent his governors to the larger cities and established permanent Arabian garrisons there.

The prosperous merchants took advantage of the Arabian conquest to trade with the caliphate dominions. Large numbers of Arabs settled in the towns, and noticeably influenced the local culture. The Moslem faith spread among the ruling class of the local population, and the Arabian tongue became the language of literature and of the state.

The agricultural population, who had heretofore rendered various services to their landowners, now also had to pay heavy taxes in kind to the Arabs. This tax sometimes amounted to as much as half their crops. The people, *i.e.*, the peasants, slaves and indigent city population, were in constant rebellion against the Arab yoke.

**The Revolt of Mokanna.** The greatest uprising took place in the seventies of the 8th century. It was called the revolt of "the white-shirted," since the peasants wore simple white clothing. The leader of the popular rebellion was Hashim-ibn Hakim, who was known among the people as Mokanna, which means "The Veiled."

Mokanna used to wash clothes in his youth. Later he had command of one of the rebel detachments. He was captured by the Arabs and spent some years in a dungeon, but succeeded in escaping, and began to prepare a general uprising of the peasants against the Arabs and local landowners. This rebellion lasted about seven years. The insurgents seized and destroyed castles, killed the local landowners who had joined the enemies of their native land, and wiped out the Arabian garrisons in the towns. To subdue the peasant uprising, the Arabian emirs raised a huge army equipped with battering rams. Several fierce battles took place in which the peasant army suffered heavy defeats.

Mokanna was killed, but the people did not cease to rebel against the Arabs.

**The State of the Samanids.** When the Arab caliphate collapsed in Central Asia in the second half of the 9th century, the ancient Tajik state of the Samanids was formed (subsequently the name Tajik was given to the native Sogdiana population), with the city of Bokhara as its capital. The kings of the Samanid dynasty tried to create a strong, centralized power, such as was necessary to combat the nomads. They stubbornly opposed individual petty rulers who tried to establish an independent rule.

Thanks to the power of the Samanids, quiet set in in the Central Asiatic steppes. This stimulated trade and life in the cities. The largest cities (Bokhara, Samarkand and Merv) engaged in a lively trade with eastern and western countries, particularly with China and the Volga region.

Literature and learning flourished during the reign of the Samanids. Poets and scholars (philosophers, doctors, geographers, mathematicians, historians and others) created an exceedingly rich literature in the Arabian and Persian languages. Numerous valuable manuscripts were stored in the royal library at Bokhara. Each department of science or literature in the library had a special room to itself, and the library had an efficiently-kept catalogue. The famous philosopher, naturalist and doctor, Avicenna (ibn-Sina) lived and worked in Bokhara at the end of the 10th century. Later his works were translated into Latin and became widespread in medieval Europe.

## 9. KHAZARS AND BULGARS ON THE VOLGA

**The Khazar State on the Volga.** The Turkic-Khazars formed a strong Khazar state on the Lower Volga in the 7th century. The Khazars were a semi-nomad people. In the winter they lived in the cities, and in the spring they took their herds out to the steppes to graze. Herding remained their chief occupation, although they also engaged in agriculture, and grapevine cultivation. The Khazars were still divided into clans, each of which possessed its own section of land. However, the clan system had already begun to decay, and an influential group of the nobility in the clan came to the fore. The Khazar kingdom was headed by a *khakan* or king, who was surrounded by rich dignitaries. The king was rendered divine homage. The country, however, was governed by a lord lieutenant and not by the khakan himself.

The khakan lived in Itil, a populous city situated upon the delta of the Volga. Outside the city walls were wooden dwellings and felt nomad tents. The royal brick palace was situated on an island connected

with the bank by a floating bridge. The eastern side of the city was inhabited by visiting merchants—people from Khoresm, Arabs, Greeks, Jews and others. The many markets here had a diversity of wares from Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga region and the Slavonic lands. Itil was an important centre for southeastern trade, and its commercial intercourse with Khoresm was of especial importance. The duty which the merchants paid the Khazars constituted one of the chief sources of income for the khakan's treasury. The regular intercourse with Transcaucasia and Khoresm had an important influence on the constitution of the Khazar state and the everyday life of its population. The Khazar ruling class and the king embraced Judaism.

Another important Khazar city was Sarkel on the Don. Sarkel was built with the help of Byzantine engineers, and was intended to afford protection against irruptions of nomads from the north and the east.

The Khazar state reached the zenith of its power in the 9th century. In the south the Khazars in alliance with Byzantium fought against the Arabs and even went as far as the Araxes River. West of the Volga, the lands between the Caspian and Azov seas belonged to the Khazars, who at one time had subjugated part of the Crimea and imposed tribute upon the Slavonic tribes living along the Dnieper and the Oka rivers. In the north their power extended to the middle reaches of the Volga.

The closest neighbours of the Khazars were the Pechenegs, who, in the 9th century, roamed between the Yaik (the Ural) River and the Volga. Harassed by other nomad tribes as well as by the Khazars, the Pechenegs moved further west in the second half of the 9th century, and occupied the steppe between the Don and the Dnieper.

**Bulgar State on the Volga and Kama.** The union of Bulgar tribes on the Volga broke up as a result of the constant attacks of other nomads. Some of the Bulgars migrated to the Danube. Here they were absorbed by the Slavs, but they handed down their own tribal name to these people. Others went north up the Volga and settled on the lands along the lower reaches of the Kama and the Middle Volga, where they formed an independent state. During this period of migration to the Kama and the Volga, the Bulgars were still nomads. In their new environment they turned to agriculture. According to the accounts of Arab writers, the Bulgars cultivated wheat, barley and millet.

In the Bulgar state the power belonged to the king, the tribal chieftains and the tribal nobility. Most of the towns were situated near the confluence of the Kama and the Volga. The Arabs called the Bulgar capital on the Volga, the "Great City." Merchants from the Slav lands, from Transcaucasia, Byzantium and Central Asia, paid annual visits to the capital of Bulgaria. From the Slav lands they brought strong,

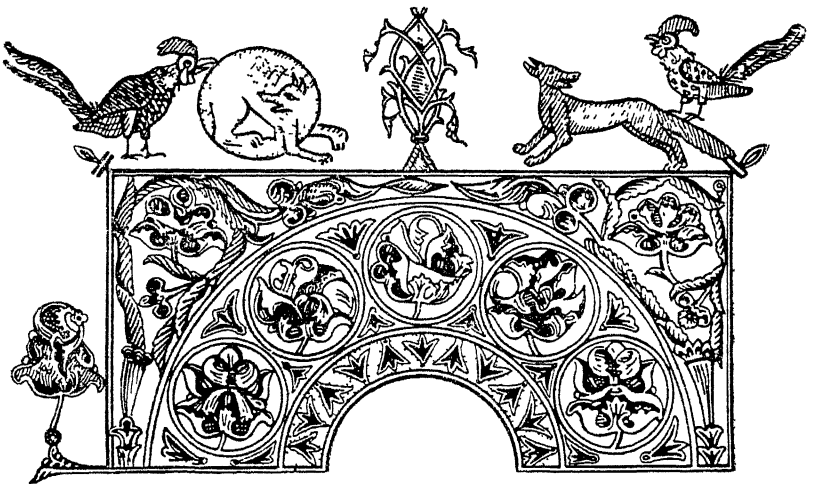
stalwart slaves and valuable furs. Arabian merchants came with steel swords, silk and cotton fabrics, and various rich ornaments.

The Bulgars themselves made journeys for furs to the north, which they called the "land of gloom." They bartered with the trappers of that country. The Bulgar merchants would lay out their wares in a prearranged spot and then depart. The following day they would find animal skins set out beside their own goods. If the Bulgar merchant was satisfied with the bargain, he took the furs and left his own wares. If not, he would not touch the skins but would take back his own goods. Arabian culture, which was more highly developed, penetrated Bulgaria with the eastern trade. By the 10th century the ruling class of Bulgars had already taken over the Moslem faith from the Arabs. In imitation of the Arabs, the Bulgars began to mint their own coins.

In the beginning of the 10th century ibn-Fadhlan visited Bulgaria as a member of an Arabian embassy. He left a most interesting description of his travels. The Bulgar king met the embassy not far from the capital. The envoys were ushered into a large, richly appointed tent, with Armenian rugs spread on the ground. The king sat on a throne covered with Byzantine brocades. On his right hand sat the chiefs of his subject tribes. During the feast the guests were regaled with chunks of meat and drinks made of honey. Ibn-Fadhlan also saw Russian merchants there. They were strong stalwart people. Each of them was armed with a battle-ax, a knife and a sword, with which he never parted.

After the formation of the Bulgar and Khazar kingdoms, the Volga became a very important trade route between Europe and Asia. Its upper reaches closely approach the Western Dvina, which flows into the Baltic Sea. Thus there was an almost complete river route between the Caspian and the Baltic seas. Where there was a break in the river system, boats were hauled overland by "portage."

Arabian merchants came in great numbers to trade on the Volga in the 8th-10th centuries. They paid for their purchases with dirhems, small silver Arabian coins, which were current throughout Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, Scandinavia and even Germany.



# THE KIEV STATE

*Chapter III*

## FORMATION OF THE KIEV STATE

### 10. THE SLAVS IN THE 6TH-9TH CENTURIES

**The Slavs in the 6th and 7th Centuries.** The ancestors of the Slavs, one of the most numerous peoples in Europe, inhabited the greater part of Eastern Europe since time immemorial. According to Roman writers of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., who knew the Slavs as Venedi, the Slavs lived along the Vistula and on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea.

Byzantine writers of the 6th century referred to the Eastern Slavs as Antes. The Eastern Slavs lived in the region of the Carpathians, the lower reaches of the Danube, along the Dniester, the Dnieper and the Don, occupying almost the whole of the southern part of Eastern Europe as far as the coasts of the Black Sea and Azov Sea. The Eastern Slavs engaged in agriculture, herding, fishing and hunting. They were also acquainted with the working of metals. Their dwellings consisted of huts made of interwoven brushwood or reeds covered with clay. Their villages were surrounded by ditches, earthen ramparts, and wooden walls.

The Eastern Slavs at that time still preserved the clan system. All matters of tribal concern were decided at tribal meetings called the *veche* (from the word *veshchat* meaning *to speak*). Influential members of the community became head-men or princes; some of them were influential not only in their own, but in neighbouring tribes as well.

Patriarchal slavery existed among the Eastern Slavs, but slave labour did not play a significant role in their economy. Captives were either sold to foreign merchants, were permitted to return to their own land for a ransom, or, after spending several years in captivity, were given their freedom and the right to stay in the community as freemen.

Beginning with the 5th century, the Eastern and Western Slavs, year after year, ravaged the Danube lands which formed part of the Byzantine empire. Tall, strong and very hardy, the Slavs were inured to heat, cold and hunger. In war they displayed great adroitness and cunning, and though armed only with shields and javelins, rushed boldly at the enemy. During the wars with Byzantium the Slavs mastered the Byzantine military art and acquired weapons which they learned to use even better than the Byzantines themselves.

From the 6th century the Slavs no longer confined themselves to raiding the frontier regions of the Byzantine empire, but also began to settle on the conquered lands. They peopled the entire northern part of the Balkan Peninsula almost as far as Constantinople and even penetrated the Peloponnesus.

A nomad horde of Bulgars invaded the Danube Valley in the 7th century. Culturally, the Danube Slavs, an agricultural people, were far superior to the Bulgar herdsmen. This explains why the Bulgars who settled on the Danube lands were quickly Slavonicized. The descendants of the Bulgar princes headed the Slavonic kingdom which was formed at the end of the 7th century south of the Danube and which was called Bulgaria (or Bulgaria on the Danube, in contradistinction to Bulgaria on the Kama).

**Slavonic Tribes in the 8th-9th Centuries.** In the 8th and 9th centuries the Eastern Slavs split up into several tribes. The Slavonic tribes which had once inhabited the Black Sea steppes and its shores had, for the most part, been swept away by the influx of nomads. The *Polyane* (from the word *polye* meaning *field*) lived along the middle reaches of the Dnieper in the region of Kiev, bordering on the steppe. The land west of the Polyane (in the western regions of the present Ukraine) was inhabited by the *Dulebi* or *Volynyane* (*Volhynians*), while south of them, in what is today the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic as far as the Lower Danube dwelt the *Tivertsi* and *Ulichi*. Northwest of the Polyane, as far as the Pripyat, a tributary of the Dnieper, were the *Drevlyane*, the "forest dwellers" (from *drevo* meaning *tree*) and the *Dregovichi* (*drya-*

*gva*— swamp). The *Severyane* lived on the left bank of the Dnieper, along its tributary, the Desna. The vast expanse along the upper reaches of the Dnieper, beginning from the Smolensk region, and along the Western Dvina, was inhabited by the *Krivichi*. The *Radimichi*, who dwelt along the Sozh River, a tributary of the Dnieper, formed a separate tribe. The Slavs inhabiting the shores of Lake Ilmen were known as the Ilmen Slavs, or the Novgorod Slavs, after the city of Novgorod. East of the Dnieper basin, along the Oka and its tributary, the Moskva River, lived the *Vyatichi*.

**Pursuits and Social System of the Eastern Slavs.** In the 8th and 9th centuries the Eastern Slavs were chiefly an agricultural people. In wooded areas agriculture was carried on in forest clearings, the underbrush being cut away and the large trees being stripped of their bark to rot away. The next year the patch was prepared for cultivation by firing the soil and loosening it with hoes, or it was ploughed up. Besides agriculture an important place in the economy of the group was occupied by such pursuits as hunting, collecting the honey of wild bees, and fishing. In the southern regions agriculture was of greater importance than in the north.

By the 9th century the clan system among the Eastern Slavs declined noticeably, though certain clan survivals still persisted. One instance of these survivals, though more rarely practised, was the blood feud. Wedding rites characteristic of the patriarchal clan still survived. Some of the more backward tribes clung to their custom of abducting women. In other tribes a wife would be bought for a *veno*, a purchase price. The richer men had several wives. But the clan, as such, practically no longer existed. Clans broke up into separate, large families which, no longer held together by ties of kinship, continued to live as neighbours on a common territory and formed an agrarian community. Such an agrarian community the Eastern Slavs called the *verv*. The husbandmen who belonged to such a community were called *smerds*. The *verv* possessed in common forests, pasture land, etc. Every family that joined the community had the right to graze its cattle on the common pasture land, to extract honey of wild bees from the hollows of trees in the common forest, and to set traps for birds and beasts. Tilths were the absolute property of the respective families. The centre of the community was the fortified town which sheltered its members in case of danger. Gradually a group of wealthier elders took the lead in the community, and acquired large tracts of land. These lands were cultivated not only by members of their families; some of the prisoners were now made slaves and also forced to work. However, like other European peoples, the Slavs advanced from the clan system directly to feudalism without adopting the intermediary slaveholding system, since the slaveholding system was a stage through which man had already passed.

In time of war, chieftains—princes—were chosen from among the elders. Leadership in time of war afforded the princes a new means of enrichment inasmuch as they would always receive the lion's share during the division of spoils and captives. This enabled the princes to maintain a retinue of warriors whose chief means of existence was warfare. With the help of their retinue the princes seized the power in their own tribes.

Each tribe was ruled by several princes, one of whom was considered the grand prince. This grand prince was supposed to consult with the other tribal princes and the elders on all questions concerning the tribe. Sometimes a meeting of the entire tribe, the *veche*, was called.

Such tribal principalities originated in the 9th century among all the Slavonic tribes of Eastern Europe. The centres of these principalities were the towns that served as the residences of the princes and their retinue. The following towns were already known in the 9th century· Kiev in the land of the Polyane; Chernigov in the land of the Severyane; Smolensk on the Dnieper and Polotsk on the Western Dvina in the land of the Krivichi; Novgorod of the Ilmen Slavs, and others.

The Slavonic tribes east of theDnieper(the Vyatichi and Severyane) and also the Polyane, who bordered on the steppe, were conquered by the Khazars in the 9th century. They paid tribute in the form of furs to the Khazar khakan.

**Religion of the Eastern Slavs.** Until the 10th century the Slavs were heathens. They believed in the forces of nature, which they vested with human qualities. Everything that surrounded them—the stones, streams, trees, the grass—they endowed with miraculous powers: they made sacrifices to nature, decorated the boughs of "sacred" trees with bits of cloth, threw offerings into the water. According to the Slavs the birds and beasts also possessed miraculous powers.

The Slav world was peopled with spirits. They believed that every forest had its wood-goblin upon whom the success of the hunt depended. Before starting on a hunting expedition the Slavs left a piece of bread for the wood-goblin on a tree stump. The deep still waters of rivers, the Slavs believed, were the abode of the water-goblins whom they tried to propitiate before going to fish. The waters were also inhabited by water-nymphs. Every Slav had his household god (the *Domovoy*, hearth-god) in his hut, who helped him to run the household.

The Slavs believed in the power of the sky, the sun, thunder and lightning. Their chief deity was the sun, or *Dazbog*, the son of *Svarog*, the god of heaven. In the summer when the days were longest, the Slavs held a big feast in honour of the sun. In ancient times on the eve of June 24 (old style calendar) a maiden was thrown into the water as a sacrifice to the gods. Later a puppet was used for this purpose

and the people bathed in the river. This night was called *Kupal-skaya* (from *kupat*—to bathe), or Midsummer Eve. Fire, according to the Slavs, was the son of the sun. The god of thunder was *Peroun*. They believed that Peroun drove across the sky in his chariot and slew evil spirits with his fiery arrows. Thus did the Slavs explain the phenomena of thunder and lightning. *Stribog* was the god of the wind. The patron of herding and agriculture was the "cattle god," *Veles*. He was also revered as the patron of bards.

One of the beliefs of the Slavs was that the souls of the dead continued to live after death. Food was left on the graves for the deceased. Their funeral rites were in conformity with the cult of the dead. Not all Slav tribes had the same rites: in some places the body was buried in a grave, in others the corpse was burnt and the ashes interred. A mound was put up over the grave. The deceased was fully equipped for his future life; various household objects (a knife, flint, weapons, utensils, etc.) were laid in the grave. When a rich man died his wife and slaves were all interred with him. A wake was held to honour the dead, attended by military games and feasting in which the dead man was supposed to be a participant.

The Eastern Slavs had no temples. Wooden idols were set up in open-air shrines. Sacrifices were made to propitiate the gods and receive their support or appease their wrath. Sometimes these were human sacrifices. The Slavs believed that there were people who could divine the will of the gods, and they called such people *volkhvy*, or wizards. The latter were supposed to know special incantations by which they could control the powers of nature, cure the sick, transform themselves into werewolves, etc. The pagan beliefs of the Slavs such as the belief in household gods, wood-goblins and other superstitions persisted among the people for many centuries.

**The Neighbours of the Slavs.** The southeastern part of the Baltic seacoast from the Niemen River to the Western Dvina was occupied by Lithuanian tribes. Those living between the Niemen and the Vistula were called *Litovtsi-Prussi*. The right tributaries of the Lower Niemen were inhabited by the *Litovtsi-Zhmud*. The region of the middle reaches of the Niemen was occupied by the Lithuanians proper (*Litva*). This name was later applied to all Lithuanian tribes. The right bank of the lower reaches of the Western Dvina was the home of the *Letygols*, and the left bank—the *Zimigols* (*Semigallia*). These two tribes subsequently formed the Latvian people. The land along the watersheds flowing into the Baltic Sea was covered with dense forests and swamps. The Lithuanians lived in these forest jungles in small settlements; they had neither towns nor fortifications. Their small clan and tribal unions were in no way connected with each other. The population engaged in hunting, agriculture, and, to some extent, in herding. The Lithuanians who lived along the seacoast fished,

collected amber, which was highly prized at that time, and traded with neighbouring peoples (notably the Scandinavians).

Various Ural-Altaic tribes lived northeast of the Lithuanians and Slavs: the *Chudes* (*Esths*), *Merya*, *Mordvinians*, *Cheremissi* (*Mari*) and others. They occupied the forest land in the northeast of Europe. Their chief occupations were hunting and fishing. The northern woods abounded in sable, marten, squirrel, fox and other valuable fur-bearing animals. The pelts of these animals were bought by eastern merchants on the Volga and by European merchants on the shore of the Baltic. The people lived in mud-huts, selecting as sites for their settlements places which offered a natural protection and shielded them against attacks of the enemy.

**The Varangians in Eastern Europe.** A water route connecting the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea ran across the land occupied by the Eastern Slavs and was called the "route from the Varangians to the Greeks," that is, from Scandinavia, the land of the Varangians, to Byzantium. This route ran from the Gulf of Finland via the Neva River to Lake Ladoga, thence up the Volkhov River to Lake Ilmen and from Lake Ilmen to the Lovat River, from which vessels were carried by portage to the upper reaches of the Western Dvina. Bands of Varangians, as the inhabitants of Scandinavia were known in Eastern Europe, or Norsemen, as they were called by their southern neighbours, used this route in the 9th century when they went in quest of plunder. At that time the Norsemen terrified all Western Europe with their raids. They invaded the lands of the Eastern Slavs, as everywhere else, for predatory trade and plunder. The Varangians were organized in military bands under the leadership of their *konungs*, or princes. They attacked the Slavs and other tribes, robbed them of their furs, took prisoners, and carried off their booty to be sold in Constantinople, or to be shipped down the Volga to the land of the Bulgars and to the Khazar capital Itil. The Slavs and their neighbours repeatedly rose against these freebooters and drove them off.

Some of the Varangian princes and their retinues seized the most advantageous places on the "route from the Varangians to the Greeks" and imposed tribute upon the local Slav population. They very often killed or subordinated the local Slavonic princes and ruled in their stead. Legend has it that in the middle of the 9th century one such adventurer, Rurik, established himself in Novgorod, which was the key position to the Dnieper route from the north. His brother Sineus lived at Byelo Ozero (White Lake), across which lay a route from the Gulf of Finland to the Volga and the Urals, and another brother, Truvor, at Izborsk, a town which commanded the routes to the Baltic shore. Two other Varangian chiefs Askold and Dir, took possession of the city of Kiev in the land of the Polyane. Kiev was an important southern point on the "route from the Varangians to the Greeks."



Portage. *Miniature from Koenigsberg Chronicles*

Another offshoot of Scandinavia seized the principality of Polotsk on a different route leading from the Baltic Sea to the Dnieper along the Western Dvina. Most of the Varangians who made raids on Slav lands returned home with their booty. Some of the Scandinavian princes, however, settled with their retinues in the towns of Rūs, sometimes entering the service of the local Slav princes to protect them from new freebooters coming from Scandinavia.

The number of Varangians who settled on Slav lands was negligible. The Varangian bands were augmented by local Slav warriors. Before long the Varangians were Slavonicized. already in the beginning of the 10th century they used the Slavonic language and worshipped Slavonic gods. The Varangian warriors very quickly merged with the Slav nobility and formed with it a single class. The ancient state of Rūs grew in its struggle with the Varangians in the north and with the nomads who invaded the Black Sea steppes from the east, and maintained its independence of Byzantium.

## 11. UNION OF EASTERN SLAVS AROUND KIEV

**The Kiev State.** The Dnieper region and the adjacent lands were united under the rule of Prince Oleg in the beginning of the 10th century. The chroniclers tell us that at first Oleg ruled over the Novgorod Slavs, but later went down the Dnieper and conquered the Smolensk Krivichi. Proceeding further down the Dnieper, he slew Askold and Dir, who were in Kiev, took possession of the city, and reduced the neighbouring Drevlyane. Oleg also subdued the tribes of Severyane and Radimichi, who had been under the Khazar yoke. The simultaneous possession of Novgorod and Kiev made Oleg the undisputed lord of the Dnie-

per route. The lesser princes were forced to submit to him. He became the "Grand Prince of Rūs," with all other princes "under his will." The lands of the Dnieper and the Ilmen Slavs were united under the rule of the Kiev prince. This union was called Rūs, and its centre was Kiev, which is why we call this union of ancient Russian lands "Kiev Rūs."

The greater part of the population subject to the Kiev princes were Slavs, but their state also included the Merya, Vesi, Chudes and other tribes. The economic ties among all these tribes were weak, and the latter were therefore unable to form a stable entity.

During this period the Eastern Slavs still lived in agricultural communities—*vervs*—and retained various customs that had prevailed under the clan system. But the process of disintegration was already in progress in the community; individual members accumulated wealth; the labour of the poorer tribesmen was exploited. In this way the division of society into classes was hastened, private ownership of land developed, and feudal relations originated.

**Campaigns Against Byzantium and the Caspian Countries.** The Kiev state, which consisted of a number of independent principalities loosely held together maintained itself by force of arms.

The Kiev state played an important role in Eastern Europe. In 860, as a reprisal against Byzantine aggression a large fleet of Slav *odnodere-vki* (small craft hewn out of solid oak trunks) made its way to the Golden Horn (the inlet of the Bosporus forming the harbour of Constantinople) and threatened the walls of Constantinople. The city was saved only because a storm dispersed the Slav fleet. The annals state that Oleg undertook a successful campaign against Constantinople. In 911 he concluded an advantageous peace with Byzantium, which established the exact relations between the Rūs and the Greeks. The treaty is evidence of the regular relations between Rūs and Byzantium and of the great power of the prince of Kiev.

In 913 or 914 Rūs attacked the Caspian coastline. Russian vessels sailed from the Sea of Azov up the Don to the spot where this river most closely approaches the Volga, and from there, by portage, their boats were carried to the Volga. The Rūs then went down to the Caspian Sea and ravaged the Transcaucasian coast (now Azerbaijan), but on the way back they themselves were attacked by the Khazars and sustained certain losses.

Oleg was succeeded in the second quarter of the 10th century by the Kiev Prince Igor, whom the annals call the son of Rurik, and who occupied a similar dominating position in relation to the other princes. Igor continued the conquests of Oleg. He subjugated the Slavs living on the Southern Bug and imposed tribute upon the Drevlyane who revolted against the rule of Kiev. In 941 Igor launched a big sea

campaign against Byzantium. The Rūs devastated the precincts of Constantinople, but the Greek fleet kept them out of the harbour and forced them back to the Black Sea. Repulsed from Constantinople, the Rūs ravaged the northern shore of Asia Minor. The Greek government had to send a large land force to drive the Rūs out of that country. The Greek fleet, which was equipped with devices for pouring liquid combustibles—"Greek fire"—over enemy vessels, inflicted a telling defeat on Igor's sea force. The Greeks succeeded in setting fire to the Russian vessels. To save themselves from the "Greek fire" many of the Rūs plunged into the water and were drowned. Nevertheless, what remained of the Slavonic fleet made its way past the enemy vessels and returned to its native land.

To avoid a repetition of raids by the Rūs the Greeks concluded a new treaty with Igor in 945. In this treaty the trade conditions between Rūs and Constantinople were set forth in detail, and a military alliance against their common enemies was established.

In 943 Rūs once more undertook a big expedition against the settlements along the Caspian seacoast. Rūs warriors sailed up the Kura River and captured the city of Berdaa. From there the Rūs made attacks on the outlying lands. The unfavourable climatic conditions told on the Rūs, of whom disease and mortality took heavy toll. Their thinned ranks were besieged in a fortress by Arab troops; however, the remnants, under cover of night, succeeded in making their way to their vessels and to return to Rūs with their plunder.

**Polyudye.** One of the reasons that prompted the Kiev princes to undertake campaigns and to wage war was the collection of tribute from the conquered peoples.

Feudal relations were as yet poorly developed in the Kiev state in the 10th century. Big land tenure was in the process of formation The princes therefore exploited the population chiefly by collecting tribute from the people. The princes had bodies of military retainers—retinues—with whose help they undertook their campaigns and kept the conquered peoples in subjection. They shared the tribute they extorted with their retinue, thus paying the latter for their services. Each year, at the beginning of winter, the prince and his retinue of warriors would leave their city *na polyudye*, that is, on an expedition "among the people"—to levy tribute. The prince would make the round of his subject domains and collect furs, honey, bees-wax, etc., from the inhabitants. In the spring the booty together with prisoners captured in war would be loaded on ships and sent down the Dnieper to the Black Sea. At the Dnieper rapids the merchandise and vessels would be transferred by portage. Here the travellers would often be beset by the Pechenegs, lying in wait to rob them of their wares. Another dangerous spot was near the Island of Khortitsa (where Dnieproges, the Dnieper Power Station, now stands). The high bluffs

here cramped the narrow current of the Dnieper, and a fleet of ships was always in danger of attack by the nomads.

After leaving the mouth of the Dnieper and sailing into the Black Sea, the voyagers offered thanksgiving sacrifices at a "sacred" oak on a little islet. Then they followed the western shore of the Black Sea. The final destination was Constantinople, or Tsargrad (the tsar's city) as the Slavs called it. There they sold the furs, bees-wax and slaves, and in exchange acquired costly fabrics, wines, fruit and other luxuries.

Tribute was wrung from the subject tribes by violent and oppressive means, with the result that the Drevlyane, headed by their local Prince Mal, rebelled during the rule of Igor. Igor, the chronicler says, entrusted the levying of tribute from certain Slav tribes to one of his more influential retainers named Sveneld, thus arousing dissatisfaction among his guard. The latter persistently urged Igor to go to the land of the Drevlyane himself to collect tribute, saying: "Sveneld's warriors have fitted themselves out with arms, clothes and horses, while we are naked. Let us go, Prince, and collect the tribute, and thou wilt gain and we will." After collecting tribute from the land of the Drevlyane, Igor dismissed most of his military retinue and decided to make another round himself. "I will return and go about some more." When the Drevlyane heard that the prince was preparing to come back for more tribute, they said: "If the wolf gets into the habit of visiting a herd he will devour it all unless he is killed." They slew Igor's attendants, then captured and killed Igor himself (945).

Igor's widow, Olga (945-957), who ruled instead of her son Svyatoslav, who was in his minority, mercilessly crushed the mutiny. Iskorosten, the principal city of the Drevlyane, was taken and burned; many of the inhabitants were either slain or reduced to slavery; the rest had to pay a heavy tribute. Fearing further uprisings, Olga fixed the exact amount of tribute to be paid in the future However, not content merely with tribute she began seizing portions of the land that still belonged to the communities. This testifies to the still greater exploitation of the conquered lands by the princes and their retainers.

**The Conquests of Svyatoslav.** Svyatoslav (957-972), the son of Igor and Olga, was a Slav by birth, name and appearance. He wore a simple white shirt, an earring in one of his ears, and shaved his head, leaving only a long forelock. A brave leader of a martial retinue, he spent his whole life on campaigns, "walking lightly, like a panther"; he never took any baggage carts on his marches, slept on the ground with his saddle as pillow, and ate half-cooked horseflesh. Svyatoslav never attacked an enemy by underhand, treacherous means. When setting out on a campaign he sent messengers ahead to say: "I want to march against you"

The adjacent lands of the Dnieper and Lake Ilmen were already part of the Kiev state. Svyatoslav directed his arms first against the

Slavonic tribes living east of the Dnieper, conquered the Vyatichi on the Oka, and then attacked the other peoples. In the sixties of the 10th century he defeated the Volga states of the Bulgars and the Khazars, then marched to the Northern Caucasus, where he defeated the Kasogi (Circassians) and Yasi (the Ossetians). In 967 Svyatoslav launched a campaign against Bulgaria on the Danube, a land inhabited by Slavs who had assumed the name of the Bulgars, their conquerors. The Bulgars were constantly attacking their neighbour, the Greek empire, inflicting serious defeats on the Greeks. Not equal to coping with Bulgar incursions the Greeks appealed to Svyatoslav for aid. He not only won a complete victory over the Bulgars, but even planned to establish himself permanently in Pereyaslavets on the Danube, the capital of Bulgaria. "Here," he said, "is the centre of my land; here flows everything that is good—gold, rich fabrics, wine and fruit from the Greeks; silver and horses from Czechia and Hungary; furs, bees-wax, honey and slaves from Rūs"

The Greek government, fearing such a dangerous neighbour, bribed the Pechenegs to attack Kiev. News of the siege of Kiev by the Pechenegs forced Svyatoslav to hasten back to the Dnieper region. But he did not relinquish the idea of conquering Bulgaria. After driving the Pechenegs back to the steppes, he returned and recaptured Pereyaslavets. Thereupon the new Byzantine Emperor, John Tzimisces, advanced against him with a big army. Faced by a superior enemy, Svyatoslav nevertheless did not abandon the struggle. He is attributed by the chronicles to have made the following address to his warriors. "Let us not shame the Russian soil, but lay down our lives, for the dead know no shame, but if we flee, then shall we be shamed."

The Greek troops took Pereyaslavets, but not until after a hard struggle. The Rūs garrison which had been left in the city by Svyatoslav barricaded itself in the royal palace of the Bulgars and defended itself even after the city fell to the enemy. Tzimisces ordered the palace to be set on fire, only then did the Rūs leave the city for the field, where they fought their last battle. "They fought vigorously," writes a Greek historian; "they did not take to flight, and our men put them all to the sword." Svyatoslav shut himself up in the town of Dorostol on the Danube. He was besieged on land by Tzimisces' army, while on the Danube his retreat was blocked by the Greek fleet with its fire-throwers. In spite of this, Svyatoslav rejected all peace offers. His army, which was very small, defended itself heroically and made daring sallies. During the night the Rūs burned their dead, killed the prisoners in their honour, and offered sacrifices to the gods The besieged were weakened by hunger. They made a last desperate attempt to break their way through. The Greek army wavered, and the emperor had to go into battle himself, at the head

of his bodyguard—the "immortals." The sortie was repulsed; many of the Rūs were wounded, and killed, and Svyatoslav himself was wounded. Further resistance was impossible. In 971 Svyatoslav concluded a peace treaty by which he surrendered Bulgaria. But the Greek government still feared Svyatoslav and informed the Pechenegs of his return to his native land They ambushed Svyatoslav at the Dnieper rapids, where they killed him (972). The Pecheneg prince made a drinking cup of the skull of the murdered Svyatoslav.

## 12. INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO KIEV RŪS

**Vladimir Svyatoslavich (980-1015).** Svyatoslav, during his absence at the wars, had left the government of his domains in the hands of his three sons. The land of the Polyane, including Kiev, went to his oldest son Yaropolk; the land of the Drevlyane—to Oleg, and Novgorod to Vladimir. Soon after the death of their father the brothers quarrelled. Oleg and Yaropolk fell in battle, and Vladimir again united all the lands of the Eastern Slavs under his rule. Subsequently he extended his possessions at the expense of his neighbours. Vladimir annexed the land of Galich (Halicz) to the Kiev state, and marched against the Poles, who wanted to take possession of it. Vladimir also advanced against Lithuania. But his chief concern was to defend his southern frontiers against the raids of the Pechenegs. During his rule the steppe borders were fortified with ramparts and palisades, forts were erected and warlike people were settled on the frontier.

**Adoption of Christianity.** During Vladimir's reign Kiev Rūs adopted the Greek Orthodox religion, as Greek Christendom is called in distinction to that of Western Europe, called Catholicism. The Eastern Slavs became acquainted with Christian culture through their regular trade and political intercourse with Byzantium and their frequent trips to Constantinople. The chief reason for the adoption of Christianity was the fact that the class of feudal lords, which sprang up in the Dnieper region, needed a religion which would support its class interests. Furthermore, the old heathen religion was in the hands of sorcerer-priests, representatives of the old tribal nobility, who were hostile to the princes. The first to embrace Christianity were the representatives of the upper class, including their retainers. Even under Igor there already were many Christians in the prince's military retinue. Igor's widow, Olga, had also adopted Christianity. At the end of the year 987 a revolt broke out in the Byzantine empire. At the same time the Danube Bulgars threatened Byzantium from the north. The Byzantine government called upon the Kiev prince for help. An alliance was formed (988) which was to

be sealed by the baptism of Vladimir and the entire Russian people, and by the marriage of the Kiev prince to the Greek Princess Anna (two emperors ruled Byzantium at that time; Princess Anna was their sister). With the help of a contingent of Russian troops the revolt in Byzantium was suppressed. Byzantium, however, was in no hurry to fulfil the terms of the agreement concerning the marriage of Vladimir and Princess Anna. Vladimir besieged and took the city of Khersones (Korsun) in the Crimea, which belonged to Byzantium, and forced Byzantium to fulfil its part of the treaty. Vladimir was baptized according to the rites of the Greek church and married Princess Anna.

On his return from Khersones, Vladimir ordered the whole population of Kiev to be driven to the river, in which they were baptized by Greek priests. The images of the gods were burnt, and an idol of Peroun was thrown into the Dnieper. The population of other cities was baptized in the same way. Christianity, however, did not take immediate root. Heathen beliefs continued to prevail for a very long time, especially, among the rural population.

The adoption of Christianity was an important event in the life of Kiev Rūs. In comparison with heathenism, Christianity was a great advance on the path of progress. It stimulated the further development and strengthening of feudal relations in Kiev Rūs, since the Greek clergy employed peasant serfs on their church lands, and not slaves. The church advocated the liberation of the slaves.

Christianity was instrumental in spreading the higher Byzantine culture among the Eastern Slavs. The establishment of a single religion hastened the unification of all Slavonic tribes and strengthened the power of the princes.

The introduction of Christianity also brought about closer ties with Byzantium and the states of Western Europe. Vladimir maintained friendly relations with Czechia, Poland and Hungary. He became related to the Greek imperial house through his marriage with Anna The cultural influence of the more enlightened Christian countries also increased. Kiev, in the manner of Byzantium, erected stone buildings ornamented with paintings and mosaic work. The heathen shrines gave way to a church built by Greek craftsmen, and, beside it, a palace was erected for Vladimir.

Education became more widespread. About a hundred years before the conversion of Rūs, the missionaries Cyril and Methodius, upon instructions from the Greek government, invented a Slavonic alphabet and translated the Greek scriptural books into the Slavonic (Bulgarian) dialect to facilitate the preaching of Christianity among the Western and Southern Slavs. Thanks to this, Kiev Rūs, after its conversion, received books in the Slavonic language. Vladimir

ordered the children of the nobility to be taken from their parents and forcibly taught to read and write.



Princes at a feast
*Sylvester's Annals (14th century)*

The memory of Vladimir has been preserved in folk songs or *byliny*. In these songs the people embodied their ideal of love for their native land in the persons of their valorous knights—Prince Vladimir's warriors, the peasant Ilya of Murom, Dobrynya Nikitich, Alyosha Popovich, and others who defended their Russian land against the dwellers of the steppes. These folk songs present the period of Kiev Rūs as a brilliant epoch in Russian history.

**Yaroslav Mudry (the Wise).** Vladimir died in 1015 and immediately after his death a fierce struggle broke out among his sons. One of them, Svyatopolk, seized the power in Kiev and slew his brothers, Boris, Gleb and Svyatoslav. Another son, Yaroslav Vladimirovich, who had been entrusted with the government of Novgorod during his father's lifetime, attacked Svyatopolk. With the help of the people of Novgorod, he routed Svyatopolk, who fled to Poland to his father-in-law, Prince Boleslaus the Brave. This internecine warfare among the princes exposed the Russian frontiers to foreign aggressors. Boleslaus of Poland invaded Rūs, defeated Yaroslav on the Western Bug, entered Kiev and placed Svyatopolk on the throne. The indignation of the Russians was aroused against the Poles who engaged in plundering and banditry. When the latter dispersed through the towns and villages to take up their winter quarters, the population slew them. Boleslaus fled to Poland with the remnants of his army. Without the support of the Polish king, Svyatopolk suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of Yaroslav and the Novgorodians, and was killed while trying to make his escape. Yaroslav united Kiev and Novgorod under his rule (1019). However, his brother Mstislav Vladimirovich, ruler of the Tmutarakan principality on the Taman Peninsula, near the Caucasus, launched a campaign against him. Mstislav conquered Seversk Land and the city of Chernigov from Yaroslav. The Dnieper became the boundary between the possessions of these two brothers. After Mstislav's death (1036) Yaroslav re-annexed the land of Seversk to the Kiev state.

The reign of Yaroslav (1019-1054) was marked by the ultimate triumph of Christianity in Kiev Rūs. It was during his rule that the



The family of Prince Yaroslav *the Wise*. From 11th century fresco. *Cathedral of St. Sophia, Kiev*

church administration was organized, and a metropolitan appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople was placed at the head of the church of Kiev It was also under Yaroslav that the Pechersk Monastery near Kiev came into existence. This monastery played a great part in the spread of learning among the ruling classes of Kiev Rūs.

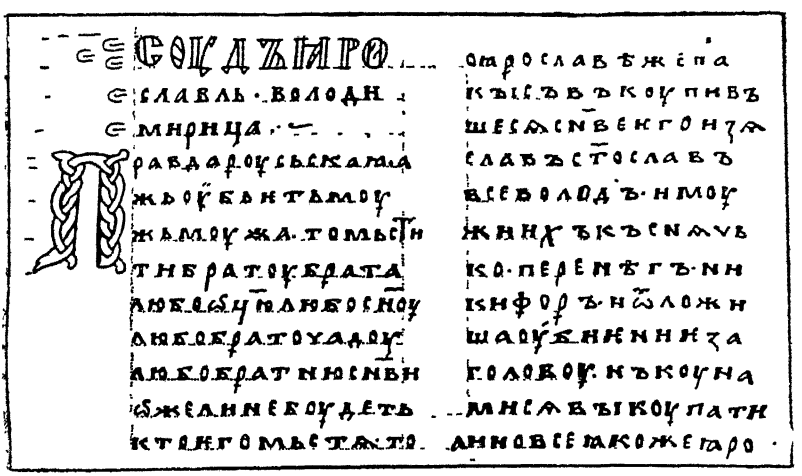
The Kiev state in Yaroslav's reign occupied a leading position among the states of Europe in point of power and the high level of its culture. Evidence of the close political ties that existed between Kiev Rūs and the states of Western Europe is furnished by the matrimonial alliances formed by Yaroslav's family with foreign courts: his sister was married to the Polish prince, one of his daughters to the French king, another to the Norwegian, and a third to the Hungarian. Yaroslav frequently interfered in the affairs of Poland Taking advantage of the turmoil that reigned in Poland after the death of Boleslaus, Yaroslav once more recovered the towns which had been lost after Vladimir's death in Galich Rūs. Later Yaroslav supported his brother-in-law, the Polish prince, by sending troops to his aid. The last campaign against Constantinople (1043), which ended in failure, was undertaken during Yaroslav's rule under the leadership of his son Vladimir

In the Baltic region, which was already becoming the object of attacks by Germans, Yaroslav built the city of Yuriev (Tartu in Esthonian) and extended his power over the Baltic peoples. He built a city on the Volga which he named Yaroslavl. In the south Yaroslav was compelled to wage a hard struggle against the Pechenegs. He continued to fortify the frontier belt by building towns.

During Yaroslav's reign, the earliest code of laws was compiled under the name of Yaroslav's *Pravda*, which revealed influences of Christian Byzantine legislation. Yaroslav's *Pravda* reflected the tenacity of the old clan customs; for instance, it sanctioned the blood feud, which was confined to the members of the family, and was not applicable to the clan. "If one man shall kill another," *Pravda* said, "the brother shall avenge a brother, the son a father, the father a son, the nephew on the brother's or on the sister's side, if there be none to take revenge, then forty *grivnas* (a *grivna* was a bar of silver weighing approximately 200 grams) shall be paid for the murdered person." However, this obligation to seek revenge was imposed only on the next of kin and not on the entire clan, for by that time the clan had already fallen apart. During the reign of Yaroslav's sons the blood feud was abolished altogether.

Yaroslav's *Pravda* was later supplemented and revised during the reign of his sons and grandsons.

**The Culture of Kiev Rūs.** The cultural development of Kiev Rūs in the 11th century was greatly influenced by Byzantium which was the most civilized country in Europe at the time. The Russians,



The *Pravda* (Right) of Yaroslav Vladimirovich. "*The Novgorod Nomocanon*," 1282



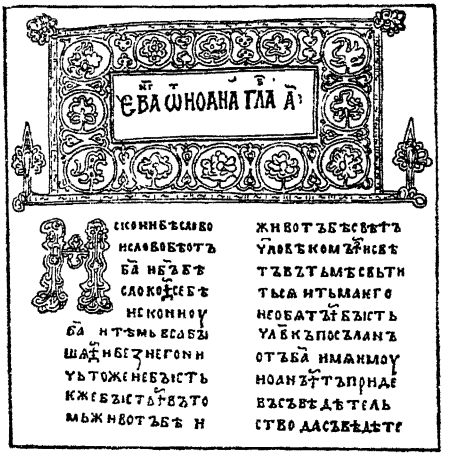
A page from the "*Izbornik of Svyatoslav*" (Collected Manuscripts), 11th century

however, did not simply borrow an alien culture; they moulded it to the form of their own national art as well as that of Western Europe and Transcaucasia. An ancient Russian, native culture was created on Kiev soil which subsequently formed the basis of the national cultures of the Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian peoples.

A considerable number of books translated from the Greek in Bulgaria on the Danube made their appearance in Kiev Rūs together with the new religion. The prince and rich people had transcripts of these books made for themselves. Other books were translated anew into the Russian language.

Bes des theological books there were secular writings, such as the Greek chronicles. Translated literature served as the model for original Russian works. The first attempts to compile a history of Rūs date

back to the time of Yaroslav. After his death these historical notes were elaborated in the Pechersk Monastery in the form of a voluminous work which related "whence came the Russian land." The underlying idea of this work was that of a united Russia and a united ancient Russian people. The volume *Nachalnaya Letopis* (Initial Annals) as it was commonly called, was composed of stories, biographies of the princes, annual recordings of events made in various cities, passages from Greek chronicles, etc.



The Gospel of Ostromirovo.
*Manuscript (1056)*

The Initial Annals have come down to us under the name, *Chronicle of Ancient Years*, in the revised versions dated 1116 and 1118. The Initial Annals are the source of our information on the ancient history of the Dnieper region and its adjacent lands. They are evidence of a high degree of learning in the monasteries of Kiev Rūs and of the versatility and wealth of the translated and original literature of the times.

Byzantine influence made itself felt in art as well. During Yaroslav's reign the St. Sophia Cathedral was built in Kiev by Greek architects, however, the usual type of Byzantine architecture was modified to correspond to Russian tastes and demands. The St. Sophia Cathedral is a masterpiece of 11th century Russian art. The interior of the cathedral contains remarkable mosaics and frescos The so-called "Golden Gate" was also built during Yaroslav's rule. Foreigners were amazed at the splendour of Kiev and called it "the rival of Constantinople." Other cities, especially Novgorod, built similar magnificent structures. Vladimir, son of Yaroslav, built the superb St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod after the Kiev model.

## *Chapter IV*

# DISINTEGRATION OF THE KIEV STATE

### 13. ESTABLISHMENT OF FEUDALISM IN THE KIEV STATE

**Development of Feudal Relations in Kiev Rūs.** Agriculture was the basic economy in Kiev Rūs. By the 11th century it had made considerable progress and spread over a vast territory.

Among the husbandmen (the smerds) living in communities some wealthy people came to the fore who started to seize the land and cultivate it with the labour of the poor people dependent upon them and slaves. In this way there arose in the community a number of rich landowners possessing large demesnes. It also became more profitable for the princes and their retinues to engage in farming on a large scale than to confine themselves to the collection of tribute from the population. They therefore appropriated the community lands from the smerds and concentrated in their hands large landed estates consisting of tilths, forests rich in wild bees, and hunting grounds. With the help of the princes and the boyars (as the wealthy landowners came to be called), the monasteries also appropriated land to themselves. Thus the landed property of the princes, boyars and churches was considerably expanded at the expense of the community land of the husbandmen.

Around the large towns there sprang up villages belonging to the princes, boyars and monasteries Slave labour was not very productive. It was more advantageous for the landowner to have semi-free peasants on his land, people who had their own farms but who at the same time were compelled to work for the landowner. And so the landowners made bondsmen of the free husbandmen and exploited them.

The mass of the husbandmen still lived in communities in the 11th century, their dependence on the princes being limited to the payment of tribute. By the end of the 11th century there already was a considerable group of husbandmen who were dependent upon the rich landowners. Such dependent husbandmen were, for instance, the *zakupy*. A *zakup* received a *kupa*, or money loan from his master and a small plot of land which was paid for by services (the corvée). The inventory—horse, plough and harrow—belonged to the master The latter had the right to inflict corporal punishment upon his *zakup*, who could not quit without settling his debt. If he ran away and was caught, he became a slave. The *zakup* was thus in complete bondage to the landowner.

"The landowners kept the smerds in bondage even at the time of *Russkaya Pravda*," Lenin said.* In the 11th century, according to Lenin, "the *smerds* (as *Russkaya Pravda* called the peasants) went into bondage and 'signed up' for the landlords."**

The husbandmen resisted the attempts to deprive them of their land and to enslave them; they ploughed up the boundary lines separating the lands that were alienated by the feudal lords, destroyed all boundary marks, killed the princes' and boyars' bailiffs, and set fire to the buildings on their masters' estates. Spontaneous uprisings against the feudal lords broke out frequently in the villages.

Relations characteristic of the feudal system came into existence in Kiev Rūs: the large landowner subordinated and exploited the small producer and forced the latter to work for him.

Under the feudal system the peasants and craftsmen were the owners of the instruments and means of production and conducted their private economy by their own labour. The land, however, which was then the chief means of production, belonged to the feudal lords. This enabled the latter by means of force to enthrall the petty producer, the peasant, and convert him into a semi-free man.

***Russkaya Pravda.*** During the reign of Yaroslav's sons and grandsons, feudal customs found reflection in a code of ducal regulations, known under the name of *Russkaya Pravda*, the basis of which was Yaroslav's *Pravda*. The aim of *Russkaya Pravda* was to protect the property of the landowners, the feudal lords. It contained a number of clauses which listed the fines imposed for violation of boundary lines, for stealing cattle, etc. The rights of a lord over his *zakup* and slave were precisely defined. *Russkaya Pravda* abolished the clan feud, which it substituted by the *vira* (blood money), that is, recompence paid for a murdered man; this was set at forty *grivnas*. Recompense for the murder of a boyar was double the amount, eighty *grivnas*. A similar *vira* was paid for the murder of persons who occupied important posts on the estate of the prince, the prince's equerry, major-domo, etc. But no *vira* was paid for slaves. Their master was merely compensated for their cost which was five *grivnas* A similar sum was paid for husbandmen working on a prince's or boyar's estate. Thus the tenant working on the land of a feudal lord was placed in the same category as the slave. In the case of crimes *Russkaya Pravda* fixed fines payable to the prince and damages to the plaintiff. For instance, according to *Russkaya Pravda*, "if a man be struck with the sword but not killed, the fine is three *grivnas*, and one *grivna* to the person struck and the cost of treatment, if a wound is inflicted," or "if a tooth is knocked out and blood appears in the mouth, then the fine is twelve *grivnas*

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1934, Vol. I, p. 256.
** Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed , Moscow, 1935, Vol. XI, p. 98.



A silver *grivna*



Silver coin presumed to represent Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich

and a *grivna* for the tooth"; "if someone hews down a tree in which wild bees swarm, the fine is three *grivnas*, and half a *grivna* for the tree." The severest punishment was imposed for setting fire to a farmstead or threshing floor, taking the form of banishment and confiscation of the malefactor's property. The severity of this punishment was due to the lords' fear of vengeance on the part of their exploited tenants.

**Trade and Crafts.** A natural economy prevailed in Kiev Rūs, that is, each farm was practically self-sufficient. However, in the 11th century the cities were producing commodities for the local market. Certain articles of prime necessity, such as clothing and footwear, were obtained at the *torg*—marts. The feudal lords wanted articles of luxury such as jewelry, similar to those imported from Byzantium and the East. The Kiev craftsmen imitated the Greek and Eastern models and created an art of their own, the high standard of which can be judged from objects discovered amid the hidden treasures of Kiev and other cities. The smithy's craft stood particularly high; Russian armourers made superior swords and other weapons. A new group sprang up in the cities—the merchants, who bought local goods and resold them in other cities in their own country and abroad; in exchange they imported foreign goods which they sold in their homeland.

The original medium of exchange was animal skins in the forest belt and cattle in the steppe zone. That is why in ancient times money was called *skot*—cattle, or *kuny*—marten skins. Rūs had no coinage of its own at first, and only Arabian, Greek and Western European coins were current. Beginning with the 11th century a small quantity of coins was minted in Kiev Rūs in imitation of the Greek coins, with the heads of the princes stamped on them.

Moneylending was prevalent in the cities, where the lower sections, especially the artisans, suffered from it acutely. Though the craftsmen owned their own instruments of production, they became dependent upon the moneylender and merchant. The increasing division of labour intensified the process of class stratification in the towns Exploited by the rich merchants and moneylenders, the

city poor rose against their oppressors, but were unable to shake off the grievous yoke of dependence.

**Beginning of the Disintegration of the Kiev State.** Despite its show of splendour, the Kiev state was an agglomeration of loosely connected, diverse lands that had been subjugated by the Kiev princes. As big landownership developed in various regions, the local landowners, who came into possession of large estates with numerous dependent peasants, grew more powerful and maintained their own retinues of warriors. The most powerful local feudal lords strove to free themselves of the suzerainty of the Kiev princes, and supported their own princes who aspired to independence from Kiev. Thus the integrity of Kiev Rūs began to crumble and give way to feudal disunity.

Shortly after the death of Yaroslav (1054) this process of disintegration went on apace and the Kiev state was superseded by a number of independent principalities, respectively ruled by Yaroslav's sons. The oldest, Izyaslav, inherited Kiev and Novgorod, that is, the two most important points on the Dnieper route; Svyatoslav received Chernigov Land, and Vsevolod—Pereyaslav and Rostov-Suzdal. The other lands went to the younger members of the prince's family. At first the three elder brothers, Izyaslav, Svyatoslav and Vsevolod, acted in harmony, maintaining order in the land and defending it against enemies by their joint efforts. Sometimes the brothers met to confer on matters of common interest. Thus, at a conference called shortly after a revolt of the craftsmen and husbandmen in Kiev in 1068 they supplemented and revised the *Pravda* of their father Yaroslav.

**Feudal Wars and the Struggle Against the Polovtsi.** Yaroslav's sons had to defend the Russian domains against the invasions of a nomad Turkic race from Asia, called the Polovtsi. In the middle of the 11th century the Polovtsi invaded and occupied the Black Sea steppes, driving some of the Pechenegs westward, to the Danube, and intermingling with the others. The Polovtsi were herdsmen. They were divided into several hordes or tribes, ruled by khans (princes). These nomads made devastating descents on Russian lands, seized captives, drove off the cattle, and disappeared back into the steppe. Their attacks were extremely fierce and sudden. A Greek writer says of them. "The Polovtsi appear and disappear in the twinkling of an eye. Their raid over, and arms full of spoil, they precipitately seize the reins, urge their horses on with their feet and whip, and rush off like a whirlwind, as though desiring to overtake a bird in flight. They are gone before you have seen them."

In 1068 Izyaslav and his brothers, Svyatoslav and Vsevolod marched against the Polovtsi, but suffered a serious defeat and fled from the field of battle. Izyaslav went to Kiev. The peasants,

who had thronged to the city from the villages pillaged by the Polovtsi, and the Kiev populace demanded that Izyaslav give them weapons and horses and lead them again into battle against the enemy. But Izyaslav refused, fearing lest the weapons be turned against him. The crowd then broke into and pillaged the prince's household, released the captive Polotsk Prince Vseslav from his prison, and proclaimed him the prince of Kiev. Izyaslav fled to Poland to seek the aid of Prince Boleslaus the Bold. The Polish feudal lords found this an opportune moment to intervene in the affairs of Kiev Rūs. Izyaslav returned with a Polish army. Vseslav betrayed the Kiev people and secretly fled to Polotsk during the night. With the help of the Polish feudal lords Izyaslav cruelly avenged himself upon the rebellious Kiev people: seventy were executed and many were blinded and punished in other ways. The Poles quartered themselves in the cities of the Kiev principality, where the populace, infuriated by their outrages, massacred them.

In spite of the danger from the Polovtsi, the league of Yaroslav's sons did not last very long. In 1073 Svyatoslav and Vsevolod drove Izyaslav out of Kiev. Svyatoslav occupied the Kiev throne. Izyaslav sought help from the German emperor and the Pope and finally, with the help of the Poles, recovered the throne, but shortly after this was killed in a war against his nephews.

The feudal wars continued under Yaroslav's grandsons. In 1097 the most influential princes gathered at a joint council at Lyubech. "Why do we ruin the Land of Rūs," the princes exclaimed at this meeting; "plotting treason against each other while the Polovtsi are harassing our land and are glad that we are fighting among ourselves! Let us henceforth live in harmony!" To put an end to the feudal internecine warfare, those who attended the council ordained the division of Kiev Rūs among themselves according to the principle of feudal heritage: "Let each possèss his own patrimony!"—that is, the principality which his father had possessed. Kiev remained in the hands of Svyatopolk, the son of Izyaslav, the oldest of the Yaroslavs. The Pereyaslav principality, which had belonged to Vsevolod, went to his son Vladimir, known under the name of Monomachus, the "autocrat" (after the title of his grandfather, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomachus). The participants of the conclave undertook to act jointly against those who violated the agreement. But they had no sooner departed to their respective homes when David Igorevich, the prince of Vladimir-Volhynsk, incited Svyatopolk Izyaslavich to seize one of the members of the conclave, the enterprising and bold Vasilko Svyatopolk lured Vasilko to Kiev, seized him and turned him over to David. The latter ordered Vasilko to be blinded and imprisoned, and then seized his cities The other princes, led by Vladimir Monomachus, came out




Captives and cattle being driven off by the Polovtsi. *Koenigsberg Chronicles*

in defence of Vasilko. He was liberated, and avenged himself for being blinded by mercilessly devastating David's lands. At another convocation held in 1100 in the city of Vitichev, the princes punished David by depriving him of Vladimir-Volhynsk. "We do not wish to give thee the Vladimir throne," they bade him be told, "because thou hast flung the knife among us, which has never been in the Land of Rūs."

The wars among the princes enabled the Polovtsi to plunder the Russian lands with impunity. Sometimes the princes themselves sought the aid of the Polovtsi against their enemies. In order to fight the Polovtsi it was necessary to unite. In the spring of 1103 Svyatopolk Izyaslavich and Vladimir Monomachus met near Kiev, at Lake Dolobskoye, where they discussed the question of a joint campaign against the Polovtsi. Svyatopolk and his warriors were reluctant to agree to this undertaking, demurring that a spring campaign would have a bad effect upon the ploughing as they would have to take the horses from the peasants for this purpose. "I am astonished, warriors," Vladimir argued, "that you are sorry for the horse that is used in ploughing but you do not think that when the husbandman begins to plough, the Polovtsi will come, slay him with their arrows, and take away his horse, then they will come into the village and carry off his wife and children and all his property. You are sorry for the man's horse, but you are not sorry for

the man himself!" Vladimir's arguments convinced the vacillators. The expedition against the Polovtsi, in which almost all the Russian princes took part, was a signal success. The Polovtsi were routed, and the victors returned home with rich booty in cattle, horses, camels and captives. Another expedition undertaken in 1111 was even more successful; the Russian princes then penetrated deep into the land of the Polovtsi.

The long struggle which Kiev Rūs was compelled to wage against the peoples of the steppes has been commemorated in folk legends, which tell of the heroes who defended Russian soil against the Tatars (the name Tatar implies all the steppe people—the Polovtsi, Pechenegs, and others). These tales relate how Ilya of Murom, Dobrynya Nikitich, Alyosha Popovich and other heroes stood at the "knights' outpost" and guarded the land of Rūs.

**Vladimir Monomachus (1113-1125).** A violent uprising broke out in Kiev in 1113, immediately after the death of Prince Svyatopolk Izyaslavich. Driven to despair by the tyranny of the prince's retainers and the exploitation of the rich usurers, the city poor revolted and wrecked their houses. The rebellion threatened to spread to the countryside. The rich feudal lords—the boyars, the family of the deceased prince and the monasteries—were in danger. The wealthy burghers of Kiev, terrified by the menace, sent for Vladimir Monomachus to rule over them: "Come, Prince, to Kiev; if thou comest not, then know that much evil will be done—they will go against the boyars and the monasteries."

The arrival of Vladimir with his retinue checked the rebellion. Vladimir appreciated the necessity of making concessions and passed a law which slightly limited the amount of interest to be paid on loans. The position of the *zakupy* was also somewhat alleviated. But these concessions, prompted as they were by the fear of new outbreaks, in no way changed the general situation.

After taking Kiev, Vladimir Monomachus endeavoured to arrest the disintegration of the Kiev state, which was already in progress. He forced the other princes into submission and dealt harshly with the recalcitrant, dispossessing them of their cities. All the princes were "under his will" (his vassals), and had to appear before him at his first summons.

This powerful Kiev prince played an important role in the affairs of Europe. Vladimir was related to the Greek imperial house, his mother being the daughter of Emperor Constantine Monomachus, and a granddaughter of Vladimir's was married to one of the Greek princes. Vladimir interfered in the civil strife in Byzantium, and his troops went as far as the Danube, where they established the claim of Rūs to the ancient Russian lands of Ismail. Vladimir Monomachus' sister was married to the German

emperor, Vladimir himself was married to the daughter of the English king.

Vladimir Monomachus was noted for his daring and bravery. "I never fled to save my life," he wrote of himself, "and always looked danger boldly in the face." "Children," he admonished his sons, "fear neither an army nor the beast; yours is a manly task." He spent all his life in campaigns and dangerous marches. "I gave myself no rest either by day or night, in cold or heat." He was fond of the hunt and frequently risked his life: twice the aurochs (wild bull) tossed him on its horns, a deer gored him, an elk trampled over him, a wild boar tore his sword from his side, a bear rent his clothing, and a "ferocious animal" threw both him and his horse

Their tempestuous mode of life did not hamper the development of the princes' intellectual pursuits. Vladimir's father, Vsevolod, was an educated man, who knew five foreign languages. Vladimir himself set great store on learning. "Forget not the good that you know, and what you do not know, learn," he wrote his sons. He read a great deal, and always carried books about with him on his marches. He himself wrote an interesting book, "Instructions to Children," in which he set forth what in his opinion was the character of an ideal prince, illustrating it copiously from his own life.

**The Significance of the Kiev State in the History of the U.S.S.R.** The Kiev state was a stage in the history of both the Eastern Slavonic world, and of the non-Slavonic peoples who subsequently became independent states. Within the womb of the Kiev state a rich and vivid culture was formed, which was destined to become the fountainhead of civilization for a number of Slavonic independencies in Eastern Europe and to exert a great influence on the neighbouring peoples.

However, the Kiev state was not a stable, political entity. Close economic ties did not yet exist among its separate parts—a circumstance which precluded the possibility of a strong political organization. Agriculture and the crafts spread throughout the various regions of the Kiev state, big landownership developed, and the economic significance of the cities was enhanced. These regions formed their own separate political centres. The falling apart of the Kiev state became inevitable.

# FEUDAL DISUNITY IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

*Chapter V*

## FEUDAL PRINCIPALITIES IN THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

### 14. INTENSIFICATION OF FEUDAL DISUNITY

**The State System of Russian Principalities.** Vladimir Monomachus was unable to arrest the process of disintegration in the Kiev state. The development of feudal relations in the different regions led to the formation of independent principalities which no longer professed allegiance to Kiev.

In the 12th century the entire land of Rūs split up into a number of independent principalities, the most important of which were those of Kiev, Chernigov, Galich, Smolensk, Polotsk, Turov-Pinsk, Rostov-Suzdal, Ryazan, Novgorod and Vladimir-Volhynsk. Each of these principalities was ruled by an offshoot of the vast genealogical tree of Vladimir Svyatoslavich. Kiev passed from hand to hand. It was the prey of the strongest, for, as one of the princes said, "it is not the place that fits the head, but the head that fits the place." The Kiev prince enjoyed a traditional authority over all the other princes,

being considered as the grand prince. It was his business to "think and ponder" for all the land of Rūs. But after Vladimir Monomachus, the princes no longer obeyed the Kiev prince and became completely independent. Kiev Rūs thus broke up into numerous small principalities independent of one another.

The prince was sovereign and master in his own little state. He managed all state affairs himself—he meted out justice, commanded the troops, and supervised the ecomony of the state. Sometimes, in case of need, or for lack of time he would entrust the court of justice to his bailiff. Vladimir Monomachus never relied on his servants but attended to everything himself, including his horses, falcons and even his kitchen.

War occupied an important place in the life of a prince The prince's chief military force was a well-armed retinue of horsemen which he maintained at his own expense. This military retinue was divided into superiors and inferiors. The superiors consisted of rich boyars—landed proprietors. The prince conferred with them about everything and made no decisions without their consent. If a prince undertook anything without the consent of his warriors they would say to him: "Thou hast planned this without us, Prince; we shall not go with thee."

In case of war the prince rallied a levy of foot soldiers from among the city inhabitants. He could not force the population to go to war, and in such questions he was wholly dependent upon the *veche*, that is, the assembly of the townsfolk. The *veche* which was controlled by the boyars and rich burghers expressed only the will of the rich burghers and not the populace as a whole. The townspeople were summoned to the *veche* either by the tolling of a bell or through town-criers. If the *veche* agreed to the campaign, the people shouted: "We shall all go, and our children, too." But there were occasions when the townspeople could not or wished not to fight. In such cases they demanded that the prince make peace with the enemy "Make peace, Prince, or do thine own worrying." Thus, in the 12th century, a prince could not go to war or resist an enemy invasion without the support of the *veche* or the consent of his retinue. This circumstance made the *veche* a powerful organ. When a new prince came to the throne, the *veche* negotiated with the prince regarding the conditions on which it was willing to accept him. There were times when an undesirable prince was driven out by the burghers who invited a new prince in his stead. "Come to us, Prince, we want thee."

**The Decline of Kiev Rūs.** The breaking up of Rūs into separate principalities was the result of economical development and territorial expansion which entailed the decline of the old political centres—Kiev, Chernigov, Pereyaslavl, and, what was especially important the weakening of the defence of Rūs against foreign enemies. Rūs was no longer able to defend herself effectively against the Pol-

ovtsi. The constant feudal wars between the various principalities led to the ruin of the land. The raids of the Polovtsi met with almost no resistance. The effects of these wars were most keenly felt by the husbandmen. During campaigns the princes drove them out of other principalities to settle them on their own lands and made them work for them, the princes. But even in their own principalities the princes and their boyars, by fair means or foul, deprived the free husbandman of his land and reduced him to bondage. From here originated the old adage : "Don't set up your household near the household of a prince, don't set up a village near the village of a prince: the prince's bailiff is like fire and his servants like sparks If you escape the fire, you will not escape the spark." Rapacious exploitation by the feudal lords and interminable warfare wreaked havoc among the labouring population. The devastating raids of the Polovtsi drove the husbandmen from the steppe-border regions and depopulated Kiev Rūs.

"All the cities and all the villages are desolated," writes the chronicler in this connection. "We cross the fields where herds of horses and cattle and flocks of sheep used to graze—everything is deserted now, the cornfields are overgrown and have become the home of wild animals." The Polovtsi took multitudes of the husbandmen into captivity. "Woe-begone and wretched, black with hunger and thirst, they walked through strange lands, naked, barefoot, their feet lacerated by thorns; with tears in their eyes they spake unto each other: 'I am from such and such a city,' and the other would reply: 'And I am from such and such a countryside.' "

**The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment.** The grievous consequences of feudal disunity and the need for unity if the land of Rūs was to be saved are portrayed with great artistic power in a brilliant national epic of the Russian people *The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment* (that is, Igor's campaign). This work, written by an unknown author at the end of the 12th century, centres around the expedition against the Polovtsi that was undertaken by the Seversk princes and led by Prince Igor Svyatoslavich. The Seversk princes refused to join the league of the Rūs princes against the Polovtsi; later they undertook an independent raid and suffered overwhelming defeat. Prince Igor himself was taken prisoner. The author depicts Prince Igor as the champion of the land of Rūs, going into mortal danger for her sake. "Filled with martial spirit, he led his brave regiments against the land of the Polovtsi to defend the land of Rūs." And Igor spake to his warriors: "Brothers and warriors! 'Tis better to be killed than taken prisoner. I wish," he said, "to break the spear against the edge of the Polovtsi steppe; with you, Men of Rūs, I wish to lay down my head or drink of the waters of the Don from my helmet!" The entire campaign is described as a heroic feat performed to save the motherland from the enemies who were continually ravaging it. The

decisive battle is pictured as a sanguinary feast: "There was not enough bloody wine here; the brave men of Rūs were finishing their feast; they gave their kinsmen to drink and they themselves laid down their lives for the soil of Rūs." The poet rightly lays the blame for this defeat on the princes, who were at war with each other and who did not wish to unite in the common struggle against the enemy. He gives a graphic description of the afflictions of the land of Rūs, which was rent by feudal wars "At that time internecine strife was sown and grew upon the land," he says, "and the span of human life was shortened by the treacheries of the princes. At that time the cries of the ploughmen were rarely heard on Rūs soil, but often did the crows caw as they shared the corpses among themselves." "Brother spake to brother: this is mine and this too is mine, and the princes began to call small things great, and to forge treason, and the unclean [the heathens, that is, the Polovtsi] came with victories to the land of Rūs." The poet addresses an ardent appeal to all the princes to unite in defence of the land of Rūs against the Polovtsi: "Place your feet, Sires, in the golden stirrups for the wrong we suffer today, for the land of Rūs, for the wounds of brave Igor, Son of Svyatoslav!"

*The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment* is remarkable for its artistic merits. The author was not merely influenced by the literature of his time, but also found inspiration in folk poetry from which he borrowed poetic figures of speech and images. His poem is a patriotic appeal for the union of the entire land of Rūs against the foreign enemies.

## 15. THE GALICH-VOLHYNSK PRINCIPALITY IN THE 12TH-13TH CENTURIES

**Southwestern Rūs.** Southwestern Rūs separated from Kiev at an early date and formed an independent state on the foothills of the Carpathians. It was one of the richest and most populous Russian regions. This land suffered less from the inroads of the steppe dwellers than the Dnieper region. Its proximity to the countries of Central Europe—Poland and Hungary—contributed to the development of its trade. The salt mines of Galich supplied all of Kiev Rūs with salt. The local feudal lords—boyars and bishops—lost no time in seizing the finest lands for themselves. Their wealth enabled the Galich and Volhynsk boyars to acquire great political influence and power. They had their own bodies of warriors with whom they went to war, they maintained relations with foreign states, and exercised the right of dismissing their own princes.

Two principalities were formed in Southwestern Rūs in the 12th century: the Galich principality, the chief city of which was Galich, and Volhynia, whose main city was Vladimir. The Galich princi-

pality thrived greatly under Prince Yaroslav Osmomysl (1152-1187). Evidence of the might of this prince can be found in the words which the author of *The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment* addresses to him. "Yaroslav Osmomysl of Galich! Thou sittest high on thy throne. Thou hast propped up the Hungarian mountains with thine iron regiments, thou hast barred the path of the king (of Hungary), thou hast shut the gates to the Danube.... Fear of thee fills the lands, thou wilt open the gates to Kiev." Yaroslav was called *Osmomysl*—man of great wisdom—not only because of his native wisdom but also because of his great learning—he knew several foreign languages.

**The Founding of the Galich-Volhynsk Principality.** After the death of Yaroslav Osmomysl, disturbances broke out in Galich. Displeased with his son, who wanted to rule independently, the boyars appealed to the Hungarian king for aid.

Galich was invaded by Hungarian troops who, with the support of boyar traitors placed Andrew, the son of the Hungarian king, on the throne. The Hungarians bore themselves as conquerors in Galich and aroused a strong feeling of popular animosity. Prince Andrew was driven out with the help of the Poles who were called in from abroad. However, the disturbances still continued. A descendant of Monomachus, Roman Mstislavich, prince of the neighbouring principality of Vladimir-Volhynsk, took advantage of this circumstance to seize Galich and annex it to his principality (1199), thus establishing the Galich-Volhynsk principality. Roman was one of the most masterful, powerful, and cruel princes of Southern Rūs. He interfered in the affairs of the Kiev principality, and waged war against Lithuania. He made the captive Lithuanians work on his land. It is of him the proverb says "Roman, Roman, thy life is ill when the Litva must till." The Polovtsi made his name a bugbear for their children. In his own principality Roman fought persistently against the boyars in an effort to unite the land of Rūs.

In 1205 Roman was killed in a battle with the Poles. The chronicler describes him in the following way: "He rushed at the unclean (the heathens) like a lion, his fury was like that of a lynx, he slew them like a crocodile, flew over their land like an eagle, was as brave as an aurochs, and followed in the steps of his great-grandfather Monomachus."

Roman left two young sons—Daniel and Vasilko Taking advantage of their minority, the Galich boyars attempted to seize the power. The Hungarians and Poles intervened in the disturbances that broke out. The Tatar-Mongolian khans threatened from the east. Roman's sons were alternately driven out and recalled. When he reached manhood Daniel Romanovich vigorously combated the arbitrary power of the big feudal lords, the boyars. In this struggle he found support among the inferior retainers who were wholly dependent

upon the prince. Even at the most critical times the inferior retainers rallied around Daniel Romanovich. The population of the rich cities also warmly supported the prince, for they too suffered from the feudal wars and the oppression of the feudal lords. A representative of the townsfolk, the captain of a troop of one hundred men named Mikula, the annals tell us, urged Daniel to exterminate the boyars completely, saying: "You cannot eat the honey until you have killed the bees."

Daniel finally established himself on Galich soil with the help of the military commonalty and the townspeople. The attempts of the bishop and the boyars to keep Daniel out of the city of Galich failed, for the people of the city rushed to meet their prince, as the annals say, "like children to their father, like bees to the queen bee, like thirsting people to a spring." Daniel's brother, Vasilko, who had shared with him his adversities and successes, became prince of Volhynia.

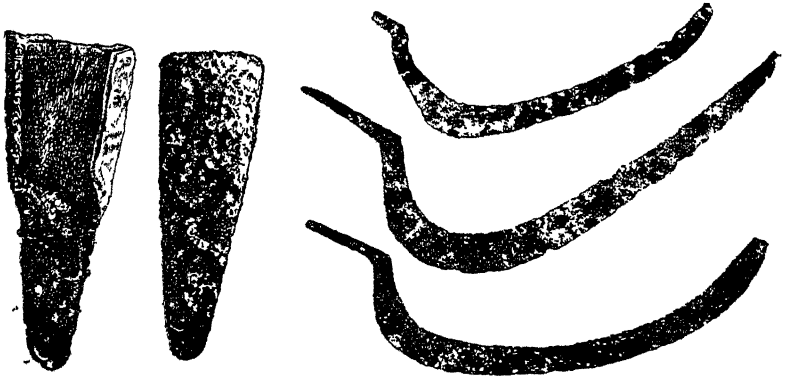
Daniel had to repel the invasions of the Hungarians several times. In 1249, when the Tatar-Mongolian yoke settled firmly over Rūs, a combined army of Hungarians and Poles invaded the land of Galich. Daniel tore into the ranks of the Hungarians and was almost taken prisoner, but he escaped, charged the enemy again, and seized and tore the Hungarian banner into shreds The Hungarians fled, soon to be followed by the Poles who had engaged Vasilko's troops.

The Hungarian king subsequently found it more to his profit to form an alliance with Daniel. The latter, in league with Hungary and Poland, fought against Czechia and Austria. Daniel's son was married to the niece of an Austrian duke, and Daniel hoped, in case of his victory, to place his son on the Austrian throne. However, the dual campaign ended in failure. Daniel undertook several successful campaigns against the neighbouring Lithuanian tribes.

The Galich-Volhynsk principality acquired a prominent position in Europe. Daniel assumed the title of king. His coronation, however, had no tangible effect. Rūs could not count upon the support of Germany and Rome in her struggle against the Tatars.

In the continuous struggle against foreign enemies and the boyars at home Daniel developed into a daring and brave prince who, however, was at times too much carried away by his love of military glory.

In the 13th century the Galich-Volhynsk principality reached a flourishing state. A busy commerce with the Dnieper region and Western Europe stimulated the growth of cities with a multifarious population engaged in trade and crafts. Daniel invited settlers, including many craftsmen, to the city of Kholm, which was fortified according to the last word of Western European military science. In his struggle against the feudal lords Daniel found support among the city population.



Left· Iron ploughshares of the 10th-12th centuries, from barrows in the central region of the U S.S R. Right: Iron sickles from Slavonic barrows in the land of Suzdal, 10th-13th centuries. *Historical Museum (Moscow)*

The founding of the city of Lwow—so named in honour of one of Daniel's sons—also dates back to the 13th century. Lwow became the chief city in the land of Galich.

Russian culture in the land of Galich-Volhynsk was of a high standard. A memorial of this culture are the Galich-Volhynsk annals, which are notable for their vivid artistic descriptions and which, in poetic quality, are at times reminiscent of *The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment.*

Western European culture found access to the land of Galich-Volhynsk through the latter's trade relations with the countries of the West. The churches of Kholm were ornamented in the Catholic style with sculptural figures and stained-glass windows.

## 16. THE PRINCIPALITY OF ROSTOV-SUZDAL

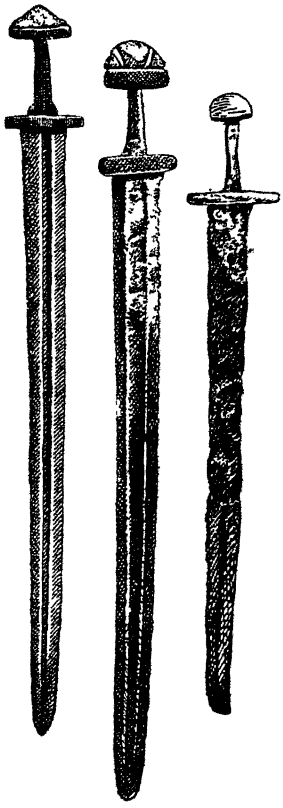
**Northeastern Rūs.** The powerful principality of Rostov-Suzdal, situated northeast of the land of Kiev, between the Volga and the Oka, was formed in the 12th century. The land here could not boast of its natural riches. The forests abounded in wild animals and bees, and the rivers teemed with fish, but the only large fertile plain was that along the Klyazma River.

Along the Oka and its tributary, the Moskva River, lived the Slavonic tribe of Vyatichi. The Slavonic population of this territory was augmented by the steady influx of Smolensk Krivichi and Novgorod Slavs. The Slavonic city of Rostov is mentioned as early as the 10th century. Another very ancient Slavonic city was Suzdal. During

the rule of Yaroslav the city of Yaroslavl was founded (11th century). The city of Vladimir was probably built during the rule of Vladimir Monomachus (12th century).

The neighbours of the Vyatichi were the Merya, Vesi and Mordvinians. The chief pursuits of these peoples were tree felling, hunting and collection of honey, and also agriculture. In the 12th century their clan system was already in a state of decay. A number of rich families came to the fore. The tribes were ruled by princes. For a long time heathen beliefs prevailed among the non-Russian population of the Oka and the Volga regions. As among the ancient Slavs the worship of trees, rocks and the waters was widespread. People believed in wood-goblins, water-goblins and other spirits. They had a strong belief in wizards.

The Russian feudal lords began to seize the land of the Merya and Vesi and, later, of the Mordvinians. The Russian princes exacted tribute from the local population.



Steel swords of the 10th-11th centuries. From barrows in the central region of the U.S.S.R
*Historical Museum (Moscow)*

In the 12th century the boyars and church authorities both in the Rostov-Suzdal principality and in the Dnieper region appropriated the lands inhabited by Russian peasants and non-Russian peoples and reduced the population to bondage. The annals speak of the Rostov bishop, Fyodor, as follows: "Grievously did the people suffer at his hands; they were deprived of their villages and weapons and horses, while others he reduced to servitude, threw into prison and robbed." By such means did the feudal lords increase their possessions in the land of Suzdal. The population between the Oka and the Volga was forcibly converted to Christianity.

An independent principality was formed on the land of Rostov-Suzdal in the first half of the 12th century. The first Rostov-Suzdal prince was Yuri Dolgoruki, son of Vladimir Monomachus. Here he seized large domains and had no scruples about appropriating the patrimonies of the local boyars. Legend has it that the village be-

longing to the boyar Kuchka stood on the present site of Moscow. Yuri took possession of this village. The princely demesne of Moscow arose on the banks of the Moskva River. It was here that Prince Yuri entertained his ally, the prince of Chernigov, in 1147. The estate being situated on the boundary between the land of Suzdal and Chernigov, Prince Yuri erected a wooden wall round Moscow, which he converted into a fortress (1156). Yuri Dolgoruki was the most powerful of the Russian princes of those days. He fought successfully against the Volga Bulgars and brought Novgorod under his domination. He also succeeded in seizing Kiev. Yuri, who became the prince of Kiev, died in 1157.

**Andrei Bogolyubski and the Struggle with the Boyars.** During the reign of Yuri's son, Andrei Bogolyubski (1157-1174) the land of Rostov-Suzdal became a separate feudal principality. Andrei subjected the neighbouring princes and made them his vassals. In 1169 his troops, operating jointly with the troops of other princes, his allies, took Kiev "on the shield" (*i. e.*, stormed it). For three whole days they pillaged the ancient capital. The next year Andrei sent an army to reduce Novgorod. The people of Novgorod successfully repelled the attacks of the Suzdal army, which was compelled to raise the siege of the city and withdraw after suffering heavy losses. But Novgorod subsisted on grain that came from the land of Suzdal. Andrei stopped the delivery of grain to Novgorod, thereby forcing it to surrender. It was the events of 1169, when Kiev was taken and sacked, that marked its utter decline. On the other hand, the Suzdal city of Vladimir, which Andrei made the capital of his principality, acquired great importance.

Andrei built his capital with great splendour, inviting artists from Western Europe. The Uspensky Cathedral erected in Vladimir during his rule bears traces of the influence of western art. Bogolyubovo, the fortified estate of the prince, was situated near Vladimir. Here the grand prince spent the greater part of his time. It was from this that he received the name of Bogolyubski.

Uneasy over the might of the Rostov and Suzdal boyars, Andrei endeavoured to increase his power within his own principality. He banished the boyars and surrounded himself with people of humble origin. The commoners, or *mizinniye* ("small" people), who suffered greatly from the tyranny of the powerful feudal lords, supported Andrei "It is better to walk about in bast shoes on the estate of the prince than in fine boots on the estate of the boyar," one of them wrote later The boyars retained their influence in Suzdal and Rostov. On the other hand, the craftsmen and inferior retainers who were loyal to the prince, were concentrated in Vladimir and the surrounding cities. With the support of these retainers and the townsfolk, Andrei attempted to unite the separate Russian principalities, in-

cluding Kiev and Novgorod, into a single state. But the absence of economic ties among the various regions of the land of Rūs made this impossible.

Andrei's ambition to concentrate all power in his own hands brought him into armed conflict with the powerful feudal lords of Suzdal. In 1174 the boyars entered into a conspiracy which was headed by the Kuchkovichi, whose brother had been executed by the prince. The plotters stole into the palace at Bogolyubovo and assassinated Andrei. This murder served as the signal for an uprising of the masses in Bogolyubovo and Vladimir. The poor sections of the population had suffered greatly at the hands of the prince's underlings. They now took advantage of the absence of all authority in the city to wreak vengeance on their persecutors. The households of the prince's servants were plundered and many of their owners were killed.

**Consolidation of the Vladimir-Suzdal Principality.** After Andrei's death the Rostov and Suzdal boyars decided to secure their independence and, refusing to recognize Andrei's brothers as princes, invited his nephews to rule over them. Andrei's inferior retinue and the townspeople of Vladimir refused to submit to the boyars of Rostov and Suzdal. The boyars threatened: "We shall burn Vladimir or send down a *posadnik* (burgomaster) for they are our serf-masons." But Vsevolod Yurievich, brother of Andrei Bogolyubski, supported by his soldiers and the townspeople, defeated the powerful feudal lords and forced them to recognize him as their prince (1176-1212).

The Rostov-Suzdal principality came to be called the Vladimir principality after the new capital, Vladimir-on-the-Klyazma.

Vsevolod assumed the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir, and vigorously upheld the traditional seniority of the grand prince among the reigning princes. The Novgorodians were forced to accept his nephews and sons, whom he sent to them as their princes. The Smolensk princes were his "vassals" and compliantly took part in the campaigns on which he sent them. Vsevolod seized the Ryazan princes and threw them into prison, placing his own son in power in Ryazan. When the populace attempted to offer resistance, Ryazan was cruelly ravaged.

"Grand Prince Vsevolod!" the author of *The Lay of Prince Igor's Regiment* says in addressing the prince. "With the oars of thy boats thou canst scatter the waters of the Volga, and with the helmets of thy warriors—drain the Don."

Vsevolod fought the Volga Bulgars on several occasions. He undertook a great campaign against the Polovtsi, and invaded their steppelands. Under Vsevolod friendly relations were established between the Vladimir principality and distant Georgia. Vsevolod employed Georgian craftsmen to build the Dmitrov Cathedral in Vladimir.

Georgian annals speak of the might of the Grand Prince of Vladimir describing him as a man "whom 300 kings obey."

Vsevolod treated the boyars with the same high hand as did his brother Andrei. "He even showed no respect for the powerful boyars," the chronicler writes.

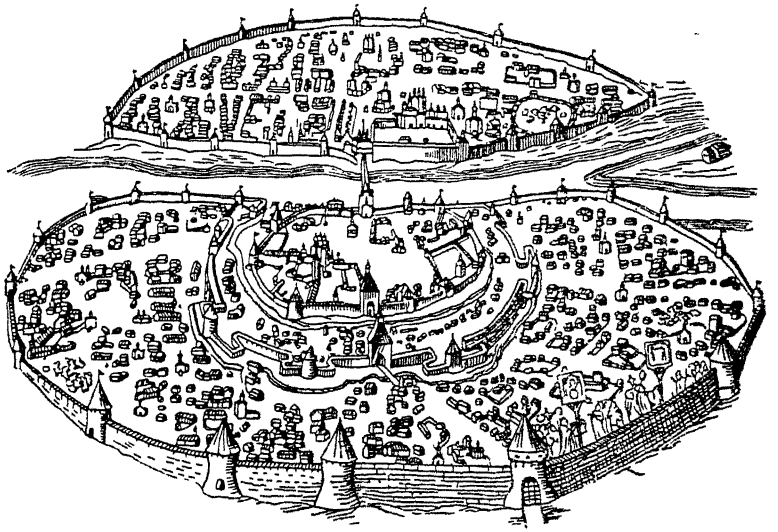
Vsevolod is known as *Bolshoye Gnezdo* (the "Large Nest") because he had so many sons. After Vsevolod's death each of his sons received an appanage in the principality of Vladimir. As time went on, these portions of land were divided up more and more. After separating from Kiev Rūs, the land of Vladimir-Suzdal was broken up into a number of petty principalities. Under Vsevolod's sons it was split into five parts and under his grandsons, into twelve. The oldest member of the prince's family received the principal city of Vladimir and the title "Grand Prince of Vladimir."

**The Conquest of the Mordvinian Lands.** Russian feudalism expanded and absorbed the lands of non-Russian peoples. After Vsevolod's death the Vladimir princes continued their conquest of the peoples living along the Oka and the Middle Volga. The Mordvinians retained their independence for a long time. In 1221 Vsevolod's son, the Grand Prince Yuri Vsevolodovich, built a fortress on the site of a small Mordvinian town, at the confluence of the Oka and Volga; this fortress was named Nizhni Novgorod (now the city of Gorky), from here the Russian princes launched their raids on Mordvinian territory. The Mordvinians defended themselves stubbornly. Their prince, Purgas, inflicted many defeats on the Russian princes, and even attacked Nizhni Novgorod and burned its suburbs, but he was unable to capture the fortress. The Russian feudal lords visited savage reprisals upon the insubordinate Mordvinian people.

## 17. THE LAND OF NOVGOROD

**Great Novgorod and Its Domains.** The land of Novgorod, in the north, stood apart from the Kiev principality in the 12th century.

Novgorod, situated on both banks of the River Volkhov at the point where it issues from Lake Ilmen, was one of the most ancient of Slavonic cities. On the eastern *Torgovaya* (trading) side were the mart and the square where the *veche* used to meet. This part of the city was chiefly inhabited by tradesmen, craftsmen and labourers. On the western, Sofiiskaya side stood a fort containing the St. Sophia Cathedral, where the Novgorod bishop had his residence. Near Novgorod began the land of Novgorod proper, which extended to lakes Onega and Ladoga and to the shores of the Gulf of Finland. Here were located the vast demesnes of the Novgorod boyars and the church.



Plan of ancient Novgorod *From 17th century icon*

Further stretched the extensive colonial possessions of Novgorod, a territory that covered the entire north of our country as far as the Ural Mountains. The Novgorod feudal lords collected tribute in the form of furs and silver from the peoples inhabiting the coast

The land of Novgorod was not very fertile. Its people were dependent upon Suzdal for their corn supply. But the Northern Pomorye (maritime country) which was rich in fur-bearing animals, was a veritable gold mine to the Novgorod boyars. It was connected by river routes both with the Baltic Sea and with the most important Russian cities. Owing to its geographical position Novgorod was a natural medium of trade between Europe and Rūs. German and Swedish merchants, at great profit to themselves, exported cloths and other fabrics, as well as metallic wares to Rūs and imported from Novgorod furs and raw materials such as flax and hemp. Regularly twice a year caravans of German "guests," as the merchants were called, arrived in Novgorod· "summer guests" came by the water route up the Neva; "winter guests"—by sleigh through Livonia. Two inns were built for the visiting "German" and "Goth" guests (the latter meaning merchants from the Swedish island of Gothland)—a "German" inn and a "Goth" inn. The German cities of the Baltic that traded with the countries of Northern Europe and in particular with Novgorod, formed a confederacy which later, in the 14th century, became known as the *Hanse* (Hanseatic League). Novgorod merchants

acted as the intermediaries in the foreign trade with Eastern Europe, reselling the articles of foreign craftsmen and similar "German" goods to other Russian principalities.

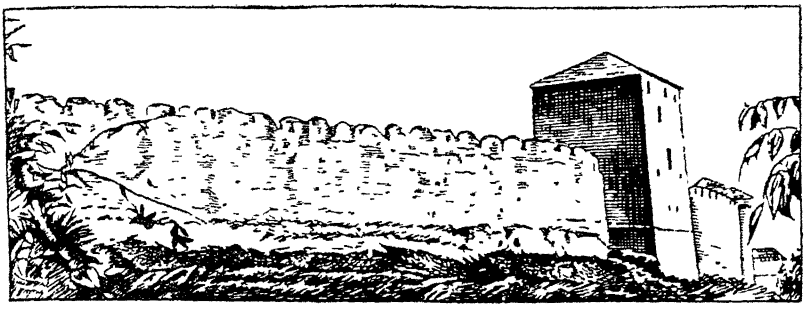
**Conquest of the Northern Peoples.** At that time the Nentsi, a people whom the Novgorodians called Samoyedes, roamed the tundra seaboard of the Arctic Ocean. The main pursuit of these people was deer-breeding, while trapping water-fowl and polar fox provided an additional means of subsistence. The Nentsi lived in clans, in which the head-man was also the shaman, *i.e.*, the priest. The Nentsi were a superstitious people who believed in the power of their shamans.

South of the tundra, in the taiga, lived tribes of hunters—the Komi. The people living along the Vychegda River (a tributary of the Northern Dvina) were called Zyryane by the Russians, and those inhabiting the upper reaches of the Kama were known as the Permi (Permiaks).

On the slopes of the Northern Urals lived peoples whom the Novgorodians called the Yugra. They applied this name to the people known today as Mansi (Voguls) and the Khanti (Ostiaks). Their land was famous for its wealth of fur-bearing animals. The Novgorod people used to say that tiny squirrels and deer fell from the clouds in that country instead of rain, and that they then grew up and scattered in all directions. The Ural peoples also mined silver.

The Novgorod boyars formed detachments of the Novgorod poor and their own serfs, equipped them at their own expense, and sent them on marauding expeditions to the northern lands. These detachments sailed up the rivers in barks called *ushkui*, the members of these detachments being called *ushkuiniki*. The *ushkuiniki* would swoop down on the dwellers of the north, rob them, take away their furs, and carry off their women and children, whom they sold into slavery. By such means the Novgorod boyars subjugated the peoples of the north and made them pay tribute in furs to Novgorod.

The peoples of the north frequently tried to rebel. In 1187 the Yugra (a Ural-Altaic tribe) slew the Novgorod tribute collectors. Several years later a large punitive force was sent from Novgorod to subdue the land of Yugra. The Yugra prince intrenched himself in his stronghold, and to gain time sent a message to the Novgorod waywode: "We are saving up money and sables and other goods to pay tribute. Do not ruin your subjects!" Novgorod agreed to wait; meanwhile the tribesmen of the Yugra prince began to rally around him in his stronghold. Aided and abetted by certain Novgorod traitors the prince of Yugra inveigled the Novgorod captains into his townlet, ostensibly for the purpose of negotiating with them, and murdered



Fortress of Novgorod (14th century)

them. The remnants of the Novgorod troops made their way back to Novgorod with difficulty. The Yugra, however, were unable to maintain their independence; other Novgorod detachments arrived and once more forced them to pay tribute. "Sovereign Great Novgorod" *(Gospodin Veliki Novgorod)* grew prosperous and powerful on its colonial tribute

**The Social System of Novgorod.** The Novgorod boyars seized the best lands in Novgorod and the conquered regions, which they cultivated with the labour of their own serfs and peasants. The latter were obliged to deliver to the boyars a considerable part of their crops (as much as half—*polovina*—from which they received their name *polovniki*). The boyars exercised their power to prevent the *polovniki* from quitting their estates and delivered the products of their hunting, fishing and agriculture on credit to the rich Novgorod merchants who sold these products abroad. The petty tradesmen were dependent upon the rich merchants. The crafts were well developed in Novgorod, but the craftsmen also fell into the servitude of the boyars and merchants. The poor were hired to load goods and to row boats.

Thus all the fruits of colonial conquest were reaped by the boyars and the merchants. The latter exploited the poor Novgorod populace—the *chorniye* ("black people")—as the commoners were called. The craftsmen and petty tradesmen were in debt to the boyars and merchants. The cruel exploitation to which the *chorniye* were subjected often led to violent rebellions against the ruling classes.

**The Prince and the Veche in Novgorod.** The wealth of the upper stratum of Novgorod society contributed to the strengthening of its political power. The Novgorod boyars and merchants greatly restricted the power of the Novgorod prince. The Novgorod *veche* was more powerful and influential than that in other cities, but its



The banishment of Prince Dimitry Alexandrovich from Novgorod in 1264. *Illustrated manuscript*

masters were the boyars, who managed all affairs. In the first quarter of the 12th century the Novgorod *veche*, controlled by the boyars, contrived to have all the chief officials elected from among the Novgorod boyars. Important concessions like this the people of Novgorod wrung from the princes by force. Open rebellion broke out in Novgorod in 1136, during the reign of Vladimir Monomachus' grandson, Vsevolod Mstislavich. Many accusations were levelled at the prince; he was criticized for not showing any concern about the peasants, and for being the first to flee from the field in time of war. The boyars held Vsevolod and his family in custody for two months after which he was allowed to leave Novgorod. Beginning with that period the power of the Novgorod boyars greatly increased. However, the Novgorodians could not get along without a prince. Novgorod needed a prince and his retinue as a military force which it could rely on in its struggle against external enemies. But every time a prince came in conflict with the "will of Novgorod" the burghers "bowed him out," that is, they banished him and invited a new more acceptable candidate in his stead.

The Vladimir grand princes often attempted to bring Novgorod under their sway, but the Novgorodians stood their ground and did not yield their independence. Yaroslav, the son of Grand Prince Vsevolod Yurievich, encroached on the rights of the Novgorod boyars, and their indignation was so great that he had to leave the city in 1216. An early frost that year ruined the crops in Novgorod land. The road from Suzdal was held by Yaroslav who did not allow a single waggon of corn to enter the city. Soon famine set in. The people of Novgorod rallied an army under the leadership of the prince of Toropets, Mstislav Udaloi (the Bold). Yaroslav leagued himself with his brother, the Grand Prince Yuri Vsevolodovich of Vladimir and retreated to the land of Suzdal. A pitched battle took place on the Lipitsa River. The men of Novgorod, following an ancient custom,

dismounted from their horses, removed all their superfluous clothing and their footwear, and rushing barefooted at the enemy, pressed the Suzdal troops hard. At a decisive moment Prince Mstislav and his retinue joined the fight and thrice breached the enemy's lines. The Suzdal soldiers quickly took to their heels.



Head-piece of Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich. Found near the site of the Battle of Lipitsa. 18th century.
*Oruzheinaya Palata, Moscow*

The battle of Lipitsa ensured to the Novgorod people the preservation of their "liberties." Every new prince invited to Novgorod was compelled to sign a *ryad* or contract binding himself to comply with the Novgorod system of self-government. The prince had no right to impose new taxes or acquire lands. The government of Novgorod and its region was entrusted to persons elected by the Novgorodians themselves, and the prince could not dismiss them "without fault." The prince's military retinue was not admitted to participation in the administration.

The *veche* elected a *posadnik* (a burgomaster or city magistrate) from among the Novgorod boyars to administer the affairs of the city. Without him the prince had no right to administer justice or decide important questions. To assist the burgomaster a *tysyatski* was elected who was in command of the Novgorod popular levy and was also the arbiter in trading affairs. Even the office of bishop of Novgorod was elective. It was not the prince but the burgomaster and the *tysya'ski* who actually governed the city.

The *veche* was the supreme authority in Novgorod. It invited princes to come and rule, banished them, elected officials and administered justice. The *veche* assembled at the ringing of the *veche* bell. It sometimes happened that *veche* meetings were held simultaneously on the Torgovaya and the Sofiiskaya sides and contradictory decisions would be taken by them. Clashes between the two *veches* usually occurred on the Volkhov Bridge.

The *veche* was a peculiar form of medieval democracy. "Sovereign Great Novgorod" was the first ancient Russian republic, although a feudal republic. The *veche*, however, did not reflect the interests of the masses of the Novgorod population, being entirely controlled by the boyar feudal lords and, to some extent, the rich merchants.



Cathedral of St Sophia, Novgorod (1045)

By means of bribes and baits the boyars created a faction of "rowdies" with whose help they dominated the *veche*. Rich landholders and the merchants held all the power in their hands and reduced the authority of the prince to nought. The toiling people of Novgorod were in virtual bondage to the boyars. At times the Novgorod poor would rise against their oppressors—the boyars.

**Novgorod Culture.** Evidences of the rich medieval culture of Novgorod are to be found in the handsome buildings erected by its princes, boyars and merchants, some of which still survive. One of the most remarkable monuments of the 12th century was the Nereditsa Church, with its magnificent mural paintings recently destroyed by the fascist barbarians. The art of writing flourished in Novgorod. Here, as early as the 11th century, an attempt was made to compile annals similar to the chronicles of Kiev. From the end of the 11th century such annals were kept in Novgorod, and the most important events in the city were recorded in them.

Reminiscences of Novgorod's ancient splendour survive in the legend of Sadko, the "rich guest" (merchant) and Vasili Buslayev. The former tells of the rich trade and the journeys across the seas made by Novgorod merchants; the latter—about the turbulent conflicts in the *veche*.

**Pskov.** Of the minor cities subordinate to Novgorod, the city of Pskov became the most powerful in the 12th century. Active trade was carried on between Pskov and the cities of the Baltic. This trade enriched the Pskov boyars and merchants and enhanced their power. Gradually they won their complete independence from Novgorod.

Novgorod and Pskov with their system of self-government resembled the "free cities" of Western Europe. However, there was an essential difference. In Western European cities the power was entirely in the hands of the merchants and the owners of large workshops, whereas in Novgorod and Pskov, who derived their wealth from extensive domains in the Maritime Region, the power belonged to the feudal

lords—the boyars and the church, the rich merchants enjoying only a limited share of the authority.

## 18. TRANSCAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA IN THE 11TH-12TH CENTURIES

**Georgia in the 11th and 12th Centuries.** Transcaucasia maintained regular relations with Kiev Rūs in the 12th century.

Georgia, where feudal relations were more developed than in Kiev Rūs, became very strong in the 12th century. The Georgian feudal lords seized the peasants' community lands and reduced the peasants themselves to serfdom. They built castles in the mountains and established a tyrannical rule over the peasants. The revolts of the peasants against their oppressors were crushed by armed force; "the people"—as a monk chronicler puts it—"were filled with fear of their lords." Free peasant communities continued to exist only in the inaccessible mountain region.

The enhancement of the king's power, which began to take place in Georgia in the 10th century, was resisted by the great feudal lords, who endeavoured to preserve their independence. The kings were supported by the petty feudal lords and the merchants, the former needing a strong monarch to keep the peasants in subordination, while to the merchants a united Georgia meant unhampered possibilities of trade.

The unification of Georgia was hindered by incursions of the Turkoman-Seljuks, a people from the Central Asiatic steppes under the leadership of sultans (sovereigns) of the Seljuk family (whence their name). The Seljuks conquered Persia, Iraq and part of Asia Minor.

The first devastating invasion of the Seljuks in Transcaucasia (Armenia) occurred in 1048-1049. Beginning with the sixties of the 11th century, Georgia became the object of continuous invasions by the Seljuks. It was then that Tbilisi was captured. "The Turkomans spread over the country like locusts," an eyewitness relates. "They plundered the people and turned them into slaves. They remained here till the first snowfall, eating the people out of house and home and putting to the sword all those who tried to seek refuge in the mountains, forests and caves. Those who hid in the castles perished from cold and hunger. With the return of spring the Turkomans came again. No one in the land sowed or reaped a harvest; only wild beasts roamed where once people lived. Dwellings were destroyed by fire; the rivers ran red with the blood of men."

To effectively combat the invasions of the Seljuks, a strong state power was needed, capable of uniting the isolated feudal domains. This became possible under the Georgian king, David the Renovator

(1089-1125). David fought against the feudal lords, who made several attempts on his life. He created a strong army, organized a guards unit of five thousand men; besides this, he brought over 40,000 Polovtsi from the Kuban steppes of whom he formed a regular army. He also subjugated the Caucasian hillmen.

After uniting Georgia, David made war on the Seljuks, whom he drove out of his domains. In 1122 he liberated Tbilisi. David began to extend his power over the neighbouring lands as well: he conquered Azerbaijan, and undertook an expedition to Armenia, whither he was called in by the native Armenian population, who looked upon the Georgians as their liberators from the yoke of the Seljuks and other alien princes.

David centralized the administration of Georgia. The country was divided into regions under the administration of governors. A code of laws was issued. David appointed and dismissed bishops. Gradually peace set in in Georgia. Commerce revived. Many craftsmen were invited from Armenia. The silk fabrics of Georgia won fame far beyond the borders of the land. They were exported even to Constantinople. David built new cities, including the city of Gori. He renovated bridges and aqueducts and erected palaces and other buildings. For these activities he was surnamed the Renovator. Georgian chronicles describe David in the following words: "He rose above all the kings of the earth; in his left hand he held the sea; his right hand rested on the rivers. In battle he was like a lion."

David's successors extended their domains in Armenia to Erzerum. Feudal Georgia acquired exceptional splendour under Queen Tamara (1184-1213). She waged war against the feudal lords and maintained power only by making considerable concessions to the most powerful of them, promising to rule the country jointly with a council of leading feudal lords.

At that time Georgia occupied a vast territory from the Black Sea to the Caspian, and from the Caucasian Mountain Range to Erzerum. Under Tamara several Persian regions were annexed to Georgia. The country played an important role among the states of Eastern Europe and Asia. It also established ties with Suzdal Rūs.

**The Poet Shot'ha Rust'hveli.** Georgian culture in the reign of Tamara was in a flourishing state. This was in great measure due to Gergia's position at the intersection of busy trade routes joining the countries of the west and the east. Here the cultural influences of Asia Minor, Persia and Byzantium met. Young Georgian feudal lords went to Constantinople to study. Georgian architecture reflected the influence of Byzantium, Georgian literature that of Persia. From the Arabs came a knowledge of medicine and astronomy. Thus a Georgian native culture was created, which, in its turn, influenced the neighbouring countries, in particular Russian culture. Education in Georgia

in the 12th century made great strides with the opening of schools and the growth of literature. Tamara surrounded herself with poets. Foremost among them was the great Georgian poet, Shot'ha Rust'hveli. His famous poem, *Knight in the Tiger's Skin*, is of world significance, being the first and earliest work of the Renaissance.

Shot'ha Rust'hveli was educated in Greece and was one of the most enlightened feudal lords of Georgia. He served at the court of Queen Tamara and was an ardent supporter of a strong monarchy. According to legend he greatly aided Tamara in her struggle against unruly vassals, thereby incurring the hatred of the nobility and eventually being forced to withdraw into exile. His poem, written at the end of the 12th century, is dedicated to Tamara.

Rust'hveli drew upon Georgian folk poetry for his inspiration. His poem reflects the age-old heroic struggle of the Georgian people for their independence against the Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Seljuks, and other peoples.

*No! The sons of alien Persia*
*Ne'er our sovereign lords shall be!*

the heroine of the poem exclaims. Rustaveli lauded the deeds of chivalry of the Georgian knights who fought for their country's independence, and sang of intrepidity and defiance of death.

*Better death, but death with glory,*
*Than inglorious days of shame.*

Realizing the necessity of unity in the struggle, Rustaveli extolled friendship and brotherhood among the warriors.

*He who friendship shuns with near ones,*
*Is his own most bitter foe.*
*He that shall deser a comrade,*
*He will taste the dregs of woe.*

A vehement opponent of feudal discord Rust'hveli called upon the people to support the royal power. At the same time he championed the cause of the exploited classes in their struggle against the tyranny of the feudal lords. One of his heroes orders the following disposition to be made of his wealth.

*Give unto the weak and homeless,*
*And the slaves do thou make free,*
*Orphans feed, provide with plenty,*
*Help the poor that they may prosper*

*And by folk whom I do shelter,*
*E'er my praises sung shall be.*

Rust'hveli's poem has been translated into all the principal languages and, as a great work of art, will ever evoke universal admiration.

**Armenia in the 11th and 12th Centuries.** In the 11th and 12th centuries the feudal order in Armenia, as in Georgia, was in full flower. Vast demesnes were concentrated in the hands of the Armenian clergy and nobility. His contemporaries wrote of an Armenian bishop that he daily sent out 800 ploughs with six oxen each to till the soil. The peasants were made serfs and worked under the corvée.

The 10th century saw the beginning of Armenia's break-up into several independent feudal principalities. The Byzantine empire took this opportunity to seize one principality after another, until, in the first half of the 11th century, it had annexed the whole of Armenia. When, however, Armenia was exposed to the attacks of the Seljuks, the Byzantine government was unable to defend it. In 1064 the Seljuks took Ani. A Byzantine army that attempted to recover Armenia for Byzantium was defeated and the emperor taken prisoner. The Seljuk invasion seriously affected the population. The people were impoverished and the country laid waste.

Small feudal estates remained intact only in the mountainous districts, whither the impoverished population sought refuge, here, too, fled the ruined feudal lords. Uniting under the leadership of the feudal lords, groups of Armenian warriors continued their struggle against the foreign enemy. For a long time the "sons of Armenia, the heroic defenders of their motherland," as Stalin expressed it, valiantly defended their mountain fastnesses and gorges. The mountainous district of Sasun defended its independence longer than all the others.

Despite Armenia's ruthless devastation by the Seljuks, its cultural life did not die out. On the contrary, Armenian culture exercised no little influence on the neighbouring countries.

**Azerbaijan in the 11th and 12th Centuries.** The region of Shirvan in the northern part of Azerbaijan, contiguous with Georgia, was occupied by the feudal kingdom of the Shirvan shahs (or kings) in the 11th and 12th centuries. In the last quarter of the 11th century the Seljuks forced the Shirvan shahs to pay tribute to them but did not interfere in the domestic affairs of the country. The Georgian king, David the Renovator, marched against Shirvan, since then the Shirvan shahs became the vassals of Georgia and entered into a military alliance with her. This alliance resulted not merely from Georgia's victory, but from the close commercial ties between the two countries and their need for union in order to defend themselves against their common external enemies.

An important trade centre of Azerbaijan was the city of Derbent, situated on a narrow strip between the Caucasian Mountain Range and the Caspian Sea. Intercourse with the Northern Caucasus and Rūs was maintained through this pass. The Derbent Pass was protected by strong walls. The city of Shemakha was an important centre for silk production and silk trade.

The 11th century saw the final process in the foundation of an Azerbaijan nation formed by intermarriage of the local Albanian tribes with the Polovtsi from the north, and the Turkomans from the south. A large section of the Albanians adopted the Moslem faith. Those who preserved Christianity merged with the Armenians.

Her Persian neighbour exercised a great influence on the culture of Azerbaijan, where the feudal lords spoke the Persian tongue and everything was written in that language. But the Azerbaijan people also contributed much of their own to Persian culture. There were two remarkable Azerbaijan poets: Nizami and Khakani, contemporaries of Shot'ha Rust'heli.

Like Rustaveli, Nizami sang of chivalry and deeds of valour. He borrowed his themes from legends about Alexander the Great and the ancient Persian kings. His poem about Alexander the Great, filled with fantastic, fabulous description, mentions the war which Alexander is alleged to have waged against the Rūs, and is probably a reminiscence of the Rūs expeditions to the Caspian Sea in the 10th century. Khakani, the son of a carpenter and a Christian female slave, was a brilliant lyric poet; he wrote beautiful love poems and odes, but his masterpiece is the *Prison Elegy*, written by him in prison, where he was thrown by order of the Shirvan shah, into whose disfavour he had fallen.

Nizami and Khakani wrote in the Persian language, although they were native Azerbaijans. They did much to perfect the literary language of Persia. Their work was considerably influenced by Azerbaijan's cultural intercourse with Georgia. .

**Central Asia from the 10th to the Beginning of the 13th Centuries.** At the end of the 10th century the state of the Samanids was destroyed by the nomadic Turkic tribes. The Turkomans mingled with the indigenous population, who adopted the Turkic language and, to some extent, Turkic customs. During the first half of the 12th century, the Kara-Kitais, a numerous nomadic people with as many as 40,000 *kibitkas*, invaded Central Asia from the east and chose the valley of the Chu River for their pastoral pursuits. The dependence of the indigenous population inhabiting the region between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers upon the Kara-Kitais was confined to the payment of tribute.

Khoresm formed an independent state. Its rulers, the Khoresm shahs, succeeded in defending their independence against the Kara-Kitais. Khoresm was attacked on the west by the Turkoman-Seljuks, but the latter were defeated. Under Shah Mukhammed (1200-1220) the region between the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya and Northern and Eastern Persia were incorporated in Khoresm, which at that time was a great political power in Asia and culturally far superior to many European states.

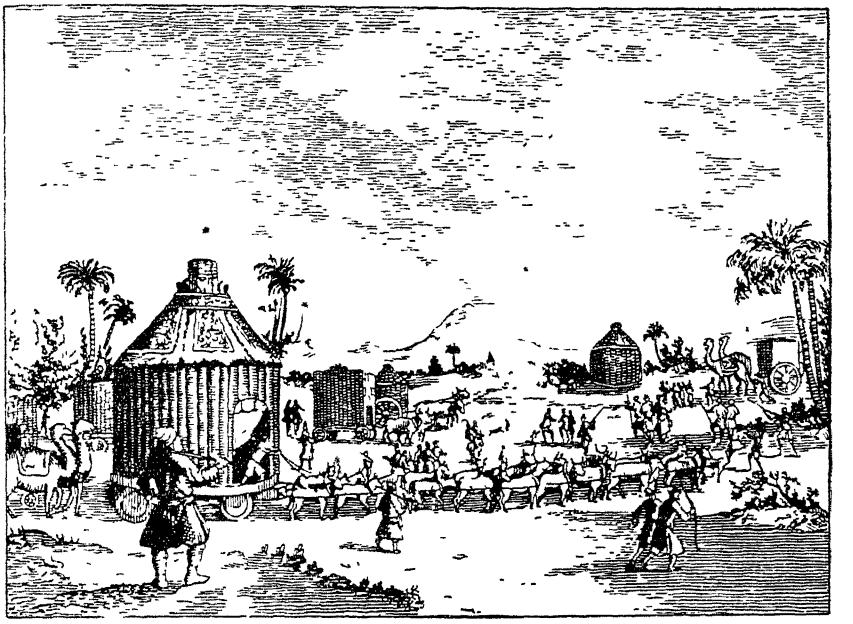
## *Chapter VI*

# MONGOL CONQUESTS IN THE 13TH CENTURY

### 19. THE EMPIRE OF GENGHIS KHAN

**The Social System of the Mongols in the 12th and the Beginning of the 13th Centuries.** Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia and Central Asia were conquered by the Mongols in the 13th century. The Mongols inhabited the steppes of Central Asia, north of China. They were a pastoral people whose chief pursuit was primitive, nomadic herding. A subsidiary means of livelihood was hunting wild fowl by beating up the game from cover (battue). The Mongols did not cultivate corn and rarely used it. The necessity of feeding a large number of livestock compelled the Mongols to roam from place to place in search of good and abundant fodder. The Mongols lived in felt *kibitkas* or tents, which were placed on ox-drawn waggons and used as movable habitations. The women lit fires in the tents and cooked the food, an opening at the top of the tent providing an exit for the smoke. From a distance it looked as though an entire city was in motion.

At first the Mongols roamed in clans. The livestock belonged to the entire clan and was grazed jointly. Several clans living together formed a "horde" or tribe. Gradually private ownership of livestock and pasture land developed among the Mongols and inequality appeared among the members of the horde. To wage war the tribe elected chieftains, or *boghaturs* as they were called Large detachments of warriors rallied about a brave and rich *boghatur*. The military chieftains frequently seized the power in their native tribes and became khans. Thus the khans, their clansmen and warriors came to own large numbers of cattle and slaves. The poor Mongols had to work for the khans and their suite: they shepherded the herds, made *kumiss* (an intoxicating liquor made from mare's milk), sheared the sheep, fulled felt, etc.



Tatar waggons.
*From "Travels into Eastern Lands," by Wilhelm de Rubrouck*

As the exploitation of the masses of this nomadic society increased, the Mongol khans developed into feudal lords similar to the landowners in Western Europe and Rūs. The khans owned the pasture lands and large herds. Their own tribesmen became their bondsmen, over whom the khans maintained their power with the aid of their retinues.

**The Empire of Genghis Khan.** Yesukai, whose clan roamed the steppes of Eastern Transbaikal, was one of the most outstanding Mongol chieftains in the 12th century. He fell in battle against a neighbouring people, the Tatars. After his death his son, Temuchin, then a minor, was unable to retain the power. Even his nearest clansmen deserted him. But when he grew older his daring drew many warriors to him. He became the chief of a small but fearless group of warriors. With the help of one of the neighbouring khans the young Temuchin routed the Tatars, exterminated almost all the men, and spared only the young, who were "no higher than the linchpin of a cart"; the women and children were made slaves. Subsequently the neighbouring tribes attached the name of *Tatars* to the people of Genghis Khan and called them indiscriminately both Tatars and Mongols. After his victory over the Tatars Temuchin began to extend his power



Genghis Khan. *From a miniature. Historical Chinese Museum (Moscow)*

over other tribes. In 1206 a council of Mongol feudal lords, the *kurultai*, proclaimed Temuchin the supreme khan of all the Mongols. Temuchin adopted the name and title of Genghis Khan. He ruled over a great empire of Mongol, Turkic and Manchurian tribes.

Genghis Khan's state was not united. All the members of the house of Genghis Khan received special domains. Genghis Khan either left the tribes he subjugated under the power of their own princes or subordinated them to his warriors. Each domain had to send a definite number of warriors to Genghis Khan. These domains were named after the number of men in the respective levies, forming units of a hundred, a thousand, and ten thousand men. The vassals were named accordingly. The chiefs of a troop of a thousand and ten thousand ruled over the lesser feudal lords. In spite of the fact that his empire was split into so many parts Genghis Khan firmly held supreme state power in his hands. He formed a well-organized bodyguard which served as his mainstay. He had an excellent army with an amazingly efficient military organization. The troops went into battle in formations of thousands, hundreds and tens, under the leadership of their respective commanders. The main force was the cavalry, armed with bows and arrows. The Mongols learned the art of warfare from the Chinese. When besieging cities they used missile engines, incendiary projectiles and battering-rams to break down walls.

The empire created by Genghis Khan was a military empire whose chief aim was war and conquests. "The wealth of the neighbours," Engels wrote, "excited the greed of the peoples who began to regard the acquisition of wealth as one of the main purposes of life. They were barbarians: plunder appeared to them easier and even more honourable than production. War, once waged simply to avenge aggression or as a means of enlarging territory that had become restricted, was now waged for the sake of plunder alone, and became a regular profession." *

* Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Eng. ed., Moscow, 1940, p. 135.

**The Conquest of Central Asia.** Having united the nomad tribes, Genghis Khan set about conquering the neighbouring countries. In 1207 Juji, the son of Genghis Khan, subjugated the peoples of Southern Siberia—the Turkic tribe of Kirghiz on the Upper Yenisei, the Mongol tribe of Buryats on Lake Baikal, and others. The conquest of China was begun in 1211, followed after several years by the invasion of Central Asia. This brought the Mongols into conflict with the Khoresm shah, Mukhammed, who, however, was unable to offer effective resistance to the Mongols, because his kingdom was torn by internal disturbances The heterogeneous tribes of which his kingdom was made up were at war with each other. The military chiefs, regional governors and representatives of the higher clergy, alarmed at the prospect of losing their feudal possessions, betrayed their country wherever possible and treacherously surrendered cities to Genghis Khan. After his first defeat Mukhammed fled from Khoresm and died on an island in the Caspian Sea. Left to the mercy of fate, Khoresm, despite the desperate resistance of its inhabitants, fell a prey to the conquerors. Samarkand, Bokhara and other cities were taken by the Mongols and subjected to terrible devastation. The country was ruthlessly ravaged. The large Murghab dam was wrecked, with the result that the city of Merv was completely destroyed. The entire kingdom of Mukhammed passed into the hands of Genghis Khan, who also became ruler over a considerable part of Persia.

**The Invasion of Transcaucasia and the Black Sea Steppes.** The Mongol hosts, under the leadership of Genghis Khan's chieftains, next set out to conquer Transcaucasia and the Caucasus. They ravaged Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia and invaded the steppes of the Polovtsi, whose khans appealed to the Russian princes for aid. "If you do not help us," their envoys said, "we will be slain today, and you—tomorrow."

In 1223 the Russian princes, with the Kiev prince at their head, marched out to the steppes to meet the Tatars, as the Russians called the Mongols. The Tatars started to retreat, thus luring the Russian troops deeper into the steppe. The Russians and the Polovtsi went as far as the Kalka River, which flows into the Azov Sea. There was no concord among the Russian princes. The bravest of them, Mstislav the Bold, with several young princes and the Polovtsi, engaged the Tatars without warning the other princes. A pitched battle took place in which the Russians were gaining the upper hand. Daniel Romanovich of Galich, at that time still quite a youth, especially distinguished himself. He was wounded, but in the heat of battle was not even aware of it. The Polovtsi, however, were unable to withstand a charge of the Tatars and fled, throwing the Russian ranks into confusion. The Russians were utterly defeated. Mstislav and Daniel barely managed to escape. Meanwhile, the Kiev and other princes who had not

participated in the battle, stood encamped on a nearby hill and made no attempt to join the action, although they saw the disastrous turn of affairs. The Tatars attacked them too. The Russians stood their ground for three days but were finally compelled to surrender. The princes were promised their lives but the promise was not kept—they were murdered. After their victory on the Kalka the Mongols advanced to the Volga and attacked the Volga Bulgars. Here, however, they encountered failure and retired to Mongolia across the Kazakh steppes. Genghis Khan continued his war against China. He subjugated the land of Tangut (in Southern Mongolia).

Thus a strong military power came into existence in the Mongolian steppes. The seizure of civilized countries essentially influenced the life and empire-building activities of the Mongols, especially in the case of China. Genghis Khan employed the services of Chinese officials for improving the organization and government of his vast empire.

## 20. THE CONQUEST OF EASTERN EUROPE

**Conquest of Russian Lands by the Mongols.** Genghis Khan died in 1227 at a venerable age. At the time of his death his empire consisted of Mongolia proper, Northern China, Southern Siberia, Central Asia and Transcaucasia.

After Genghis Khan's death his empire was split into several large dominions called *ulusi*—which were divided among his sons and grandsons. Ogdai, the third son of Genghis Khan, was recognized as his successor, the "Grand Khan." He was given Mongolia and Northern China. The other members of Genghis Khan's family were subordinate to Ogdai. Genghis Khan's second son, Chagatai, received Central Asia east of Khoresm, that is, present-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and part of Kazakhstan. His dominions came to be called the Chagatai *ulus*. Another large Mongolian state on the territory of present-day U.S.S.R. was that of the Golden Horde, founded by Genghis Khan's grandson, Batu. To Batu's share fell all the lands west of the Irtysh "where only the hoofs of Mongolian horses have trodden." Batu marched out to conquer western lands. In 1236 his horde crossed the Ural River (the Yaik), invaded the land of the Volga Bulgars and mercilessly ravaged it.

The next year the Tatars invaded the Ryazan principality. Divided as it was into a number of independent principalities, Northeastern Rūs was powerless against the Tatar hordes. The princes failed to unite in their struggle against the common foe. The Grand Prince of Vladimir, Yuri Vsevolodovich (son of Vsevolod the "Large Nest"),

refused to help the Ryazan princes. Ryazan was captured and razed to the ground. The Tatars destroyed Vladimir and overran the neighbouring principalities, "mowing the people down like grass." In one month they took and burnt 14 towns including Moscow.

Yuri Vsevolodovich, the Grand Prince of Vladimir, and his troops were encamped north of the Volga on a vast field near the Sit River, a tributary of the Mologa. The Tatars surrounded and defeated the Russian army (1238), the grand prince falling in the battle. Batu wanted to march farther north to the land of Novgorod, but the city being well protected by impassable forests and swamps, he turned to the Volga steppes. On the way south he encountered serious resistance on the part of the city of Kozelsk (on the Zhizdra River). It defended itself desperately for seven weeks, for which the Tatars named it the "city of fury." After reducing the Polovtsi and conquering the Crimea, Batu in 1240 advanced against Kiev and besieged the city. The inhabitants of Kiev defended the city manfully. So deafening was the noise of creaking carts, the braying of camels, and the neighing of horses that people could not hear each other. The Tatars used battering-rams day and night until they finally beat down the walls of the besieged city. Even then the people of Kiev continued to fight in the breach. Forced to retreat, they erected a palisade in the centre of the city during the night, and the following morning the Tatars had to storm this fortification as well.



Armour and weapons of a Russian warrior of the 13th century. *Historical Museum (Moscow)*

After taking Kiev the Tatars invaded the principality of Galich-Volhynsk. Vladimir, Galich and other cities were captured. The Tatar hordes next laid waste to Poland. Batu himself went into Hungary, routed the troops of the Hungarian king and moved on to Czechia, but the resistance he encountered here was so great that he was forced to return to the Volga steppes. Batu set up his headquarters near the mouth of the Volga.

The memory of the Russian people's heroic struggle against the Tatars still lives in legend. The hero of one of these epics, Ilya of Murom, delivered Kiev from the Tatars who were besieging it:

*He fought fiercely, his sword smote them—*
*The Tatars of strength were bereft;*
*In swamps sank they, in deep rivers—*
*Their camps and their plunder they left.*

**The Tatar Yoke.** Batu's empire was called the "Golden Horde," that is, the golden tribe. Gradually the Tatars (Mongols) were assimilated by the Polovtsi, from whom they adopted the Turkic tongue and with whom they formed one common Turkic-speaking horde. The Russian princes agreed to pay tribute to the Tatars and to send them troops. Batu granted the princes letters of investiture called *yarlyki*, entitling them to the possession of a principality. Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, the brother of Prince Yuri who had been killed on the Sit River, had the right through primogeniture, to the title of grand prince, and Batu recognized him as the Grand Prince of Vladimir. Other princes who submitted to the Tatars also remained at the head of their princedoms Their visits to Batu at the Horde were attended by humiliating ceremonies. Before entering the khan's tent, the princes had to pass between two bonfires. The Tatars considered that the fire cleansed those going to the khan of all wicked designs. If a prince refused to perform this rite he was killed as a malefactor (such was the fate of Prince Mikhail of Chernigov). Upon entering the khan's tent the prince had to bow to the ground before the khan and to remain on his knees throughout the reception.

Batu appointed governors, *baskaki*, to the principal Russian cities who oppressed the population with their heavy extortions and plunder.

The Grand Khan Ogdai had a census taken of the population in all the lands subject to the Mongols, on the basis of which still greater tribute was exacted from the Russian lands. "Whoever does not pay," says a contemporary, "is led off to the Tatars, where he remains in slavery." The Tatar tribute-gatherers and their servants demanded gifts for themselves, besides which the population had to bear the expense of their upkeep.

According to a folk song, there was no mercy even for the poorest of the poor. The collector took tribute from all:

*If a man doth money lack,*
*From him his child they take,*
*If a man doth children lack,*

*From him his wife they take,*
*And if a man doth helpmate lack,*
*From him his very self they take.*

Only the princes and the clergy were exempt from such exactions.

Revolts broke out against the Tatars in many Russian cities which were burdened by these tributes, but many Russian princes, fearing to lose their principalities, helped the Tatars to suppress these rebellions.

Novgorod was not conquered by Batu, and when Tatar envoys came to this city to demand tribute, the Novgorod people refused to pay it. The Novgorod boyars, however, out of fear of the Tatars, compelled the people to submit. The Tatars made a census of the city's population and imposed tribute upon them. The boyars placed the entire burden of these payments upon the poor people: they "made things easier for themselves and difficult for the common folk."

The khans exempted the orthodox clergy from the payment of tribute and granted the metropolitans letters of investiture which protected their lands. The clergy therefore exhorted the poor to obey the Tatar feudal lords. The toiling population of Rūs thus suffered from a twofold oppression: that of the Tatars and the Russian feudal lords.

Only one Russian prince did not go to the Horde to pay homage to Batu—Daniel Romanovich of Galich. But when Daniel received a stern command from the khan to appear before him, he had no option but to obey. Batu received him graciously. "O, what gall and wormwood is Tatar honour," exclaims the annalist in this connection. Daniel purchased the salvation of his principality at the price of his own self-humiliation but he did not resign himself to his subservient position. On his return from the Horde he began to prepare for a struggle, building new cities and fortifying the old ones. He entered into a league with Hungary and appealed to the Pope for help against the enemy who was threatening all Europe. To win the support of the Pope Daniel even agreed to recognize him as the head of the Russian church. The Pope, on his part, recognized Daniel as king. But no one in Western Europe wanted to go to the aid of the Russians. Daniel thereupon severed relations with the Pope. When the Tatars learned of Daniel's preparations, they demanded that all the fortifications in the land of Galich-Volhynsk be razed. Kholm, which was strongly fortified, refused to comply with the demand of the Tatars; all the other fortresses were, however, demolished.

The devastation wrought by the Tatars arrested the economic development of the Russian lands for a long time. "The blood of our fathers and brothers has drenched the land like water," a contemporary says; "many of our brothers and children have been taken into captivity; our villages are overrun by young forest; our glory is faded;

our beauty has perished, our wealth has become the property of others; the fruits of our labour have been inherited by heathens; our land has fallen into the hands of aliens." Learning and culture declined. Many monuments of art and works of ancient Russian literature perished in the fires of Russian cities.

**The Golden Horde in the Second Half of the 13th and in the 14th Centuries.** The empire of the Golden Horde included the lands of the Volga Bulgars, the Polovets steppe, the Northern Caucasus, Khoresm in Central Asia, and Western Siberia as far as the Irtysh. The Russian principalities were also subject to the khans of the Golden Horde. The Golden Horde built for themselves a capital named Sarai (meaning "palace") on the Lower Volga.

Captive craftsmen constructed sumptuous palaces in Sarai for the Tatar khans, the walls of which were faced with beautiful coloured tiles. The city had a large market place which attracted merchants from Rūs, Persia and even Western Europe. Sarai was a temporary residence of the Tatar suzerains. The rest of the Tatars continued to lead a nomad life, and drove their herds over the vast steppes from the lower reaches of the Danube to Kazakhstan. The khans themselves did not live permanently in their capital, but most of the year led a nomad life.

The Golden Horde was divided into several hordes or tribes, ruled by princes who were vassals of the khan. The khan never embarked on any undertaking without their advice and consent. These princes, and other feudal lords, exploited their own tribesmen, whose cattle and products they appropriated for themselves. The princes arrogated to themselves the right of imposing taxes on some of the conquered regions. Finally, many of the feudal lords completely alienated the land together with the conquered agricultural population, which was obliged to render services to the feudal lords and to work for them.

At the end of the 13th century Prince Nogai, under whose rule was a large host of nomads, attained great power, he placed khans on the throne and deposed them. After the death of Nogai his horde fell apart.

The Tatar nobility adopted much of the culture of the Persians, Chinese and other civilized peoples of Asia. In the 14th century the Tatar feudal lords embraced Islam and spread this religion among the Tatar masses. This served the Tatar feudal lords as a means of keeping their subjects in submission. At the same time it tended to strengthen the ties of the Golden Horde with the civilized countries of the East.

Tatar domination also had a certain effect on the life and habits of the Russian feudal lords. The latter adopted the Eastern apparel of the Tatars (the Russian words: *bashmak*, *kaftan*, *kushak*, *kolpak*—shoe, caftan, belt, cowl—are of eastern origin), their weapons and utensils. Some Tatar institutions existed in the Russian state for a long time. For instance, it was the Tatars who introduced the *yami*, that

is, stations where horses were kept for the use of the khan's officials. This practice endured in Russia for several centuries. The Tatar conquerors, however, could not exert an appreciable cultural influence on the Russians because they themselves were at a considerably lower level of social, economic and cultural development. Whereas agriculture had developed among the Russians far back in ancient times, primitive nomad herding still prevailed among the Tatars. The Tatar depredations ruined the agricultural areas and led to a general economic decline of the country. The Tatar yoke seriously affected all aspects of Russian life. The tax collections made for the khans, the freebootery of Tatar officials and other agents of the khans, and the raids of Tatar detachments which, in the beginning, were an almost annual occurrence, ruined the Russian people and retarded the economic, political and cultural progress of the country. The Russian people bravely defended their independence, and waged a valiant struggle, unaided, against the rapacious khans, thus shielding Western Europe from the Tatar-Mongolian invasions. As Marx said, the Tatar yoke not only oppressed, it outraged and consumed the very soul of the people who had become its victims.



Batu. *From a drawing on a Chinese vase. Historical Museum (Moscow)*

## 21. TRANSCAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA UNDER THE RULE OF THE MONGOLS

**Conquest of Transcaucasia by the Tatars.** Simultaneously with their conquest of the Russian principalities, the Tatars seized the lands of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. "As numerous as locusts," the Tatars overran the mountains and valleys of Transcaucasia and the Caucasus. When cities were captured all the adult males were massacred with the exception of the craftsmen, who were turned into slaves. The Tatar warriors shared the women and children among themselves. The country was divided among the Tatar princes. The impregnable mountain fortresses were occupied by the Tatars. Resist-

ance to the conquerors in Transcaucasia was offered principally by the people. The Armenian and Georgian princes, like the Russian princes, hurried to pay homage to Batu. He gave them letters of investiture, but demanded tribute and military tolls. A census was taken in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, similar to that made in Rūs. The Tatar taxgatherers, according to a contemporary, "demanded exorbitant taxes, thereby reducing the people to poverty and tortured and tormented them; those who hid were found and put to death." The impecunious had their children taken from them and sold to foreign traders. The princes co-operated with the Tatars and, as an annalist says, "plundered and robbed the poor and on the proceeds of these exactions arrayed themselves in costly clothes, and ate and drank and conducted themselves boastfully." The Armenian and Georgian clergy, who were also exempted by Batu from the payment of taxes, supported his rule.

In this way all of Transcaucasia fell under Tatar domination. And here, as in Rūs, the peasants were doubly oppressed by the Tatars and their own feudal lords.

**Central Asia under Mongol Rule.** Central Asia, the greater part of which, after the death of Genghis Khan, formed part of the Chagatai *ulus* (division), gradually began to recover from the ruthless desolation to which it was subjected by the Mongol invasion. Trade and the crafts came to life again in Samarkand and Bokhara. But here too the exactions of the Mongol rulers made themselves felt. The local feudal landlords alone were exempted from these payments; the Mongol khans and their sons granted them special charters and forbade them to be molested. The burden of taxes and servitude was borne by the poor—the peasants and the craftsmen, who in addition had to pay for the upkeep of the Tatar officials. The craftsmen had to deliver their wares—weapons, fabrics, etc.—free of charge to the treasury. These extortions and obligations were so burdensome that they led to a widespread uprising in Bokhara (1238). The revolt was headed by an artisan, a maker of sieves, by the name of Makhmud Tarabi, who lived in the village of Tarab near Bokhara (whence he received his surname). The revolt spread among the city craftsmen and the peasants of the outlying rural districts and was directed both against the Tatar rulers and the local feudal lords. The Tatars were driven out of Bokhara. Makhmud took possession of the city and drove all the feudal lords and the rich people out of it. The Tatar and Bokhara feudal lords united against the rebels. At first they suffered a serious defeat. The peasants, armed with hatchets, pursued and killed the fleeing enemy. But Makhmud was killed during the fighting and in spite of partial successes, the uprising was crushed.

# *Chapter VII*

# STRUGGLE AGAINST GERMAN AND SWEDISH FEUDAL LORDS

## 22. SEIZURES BY THE GERMAN FEUDAL LORDS IN THE BALTIC

**Advance Eastward by the German Knights.** While Russia was being attacked by Mongol hordes in the east, German and Swedish crusaders in the west formed a new and grave menace.

In the 12th century, German knighthood, in quest of new lands and serfs, began to advance eastward. The southern coast of the Baltic Sea from the Vistula to the mouth of the Elba was populated at the time by the Western Slavs. The Germans attacked the Slavonic lands, built castles on them, baptized the Slavs with fire and sword, and made them their serfs. Gradually all the Slavonic lands east of the Elba as far as Poland and Lithuania were seized by the Germans. Part of the Slav population was exterminated, and the survivors reduced to serfdom. The Slavonic River Sprava was renamed the Spree, the Slavonic Branibor (battle-forest) was called Brandenburg, the Slavonic Pomorye became Pomerania, and the Slavonic city of Kolebreg, *i.e.*, coastal city, became known as Kolberg.

After their seizure of the Western Slavonic lands, the German knights turned their attention to the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic Sea. This was the land of the Lithuanian tribes, and their neighbours the Livi (hence the name Liflandia or Livonia), while to the north lived the Esths (Esthland, or Esthonia). The entire land inhabited by these tribes was called Livonia. The Litovtsi-Prussi, Polab Slavs and Slav-Obodriti were exterminated by the Germans, and their lands seized.

The territory on the Western Dvina was the fief of the Polotsk (Russian) princes, to whom the inhabitants paid tribute. The tribes that lived in the north were subject to Novgorod.

**The Order of Knights of the Sword.** In the 12th century German merchants appeared in the Baltic region to buy furs, and set up a trading settlement near the mouth of the Western Dvina. The Germans used Christianity as a means of gaining a firmer footing on alien soil. Missionaries were sent to Livonia to preach the religion. Their mission not proving successful the Germans, with the support of the Pope, declared a crusade against the Livonians. The merchants of the northern German cities, interested in the conquest of Livonia, furnished the crusaders with ships.

When the bishop appointed to the diocese of Livonia arrived with a body of crusaders, the Livonians said to him: "Send your troops back; convince us with words and not with cudgels." The German knights

defeated the Livonians in battle, but the bishop's horse carried him into the ranks of the enemy and he was killed. The Germans sacked the country mercilessly and forcibly baptized the Livonians. The new bishop, Albert, realized that the people would not be bronght to their knees by sporadic raids of the crusaders He therefore built the fortified city of Riga (1201) at the mouth of the Western Dvina on the land of the Livi (the Letts) and settled it with German colonists. In 1202 he founded, with the sanction of the Pope, a special knightly order, called the Knights of the Sword, the members of which were to live in Livonia and to spread Christianity by means of the sword. Later this Order was known as the Livonian. The head of the Order was called the Master; its members were the small landed German gentry who hoped to become rich in the conquered land. The knights built castles in Livonia, forcibly baptized the population, and made serfs of them; those who resisted were killed. Protected by the knights, German merchants settled in Livonia for purposes of trade, and founded cities there.

The subjugation of the Baltic States by the German knights was accompanied by incredible cruelty. When the Germans set foot on the land of an insubordinate tribe, they divided their troops into several detachments which swept through the countryside burning and ravaging everything in their path, massacring all the males, carrying off the women and children into slavery, and seizing all the cattle. The people sought safety in the woods, during the winter they attempted to cross the icebound sea, but perished from cold and hunger. The following is a German chronicler's account of how the German knights dealt with the Oesel islanders.

"They kept beating them all the way to the village, pursued the fugitives through streets and in their homes, dragged them out of the houses and murdered them; those who attempted to defend themselves from rooftops and woodpiles were also seized and put to death. . . From the village the people were pursued into the open field, where they were slaughtered, and across the field to the sacred grove, and this sacred grove turned scarlet with their blood. . . . More than 500 dead remained on the scene of battle, and many others were killed in the fields, on the roads and in other places."

The disunited Livonian tribes were unable to withstand the well-organized Order. Having fallen into oppressive slavery, they appealed to the Polotsk princes for help. The latter had contented themselves with the exaction of a small tribute from the Livonians; their rule was therefore considered lenient as compared with that of the Germans. Several times the Polotsk princes attempted jointly with the Livonians, to drive out the conquerors, but the knights were better armed; they had missile engines with which the Russians were still unfamiliar. All the offensives undertaken by the Polotsk princes ended in failure.

After subduing the Livonians, the knights began to spread their rule over Russian lands. The population of the Polotsk principality strongly resisted the German knights. At one time the bishop of Riga even paid tribute to the Polotsk princes. One of the lesser Polotsk princes, Vyachko, especially distinguished himself in his resolute struggle for independence. He fought on heroically even after his own city had been captured and burnt by the Germans. In 1224 the knights attacked the Russian city of Yuriev, where Prince Vyachko together with the Esths sat firmly entrenched. The Germans surrounded Yuriev with siege engines, brought up a wooden siege-tower and began to undermine the city walls. When part of the wall crumpled, the tower was moved to the breach. But the besieged stubbornly refused to surrender. When the Germans started to storm the city, the besieged rolled red-hot wheels out through the gap in the broken wall and set the siege-tower on fire. But the Germans broke into the city through this very opening. Yuriev was taken and a massacre began. The Germans surrounded the city and did not let anyone out alive. Prince Vyachko also perished. The Germans renamed the city of Yuriev—Dorpat (now Tartu).

After the death of Bishop Albert, the Germans suffered a number of defeats. The knights were especially discomfited when they attempted to invade the land of Lithuania. The Knights of the Sword began looking for allies.

**The Teutonic Order.** Next to Livonia there existed another German Order, the Teutonic. Between the Niemen and the Vistula lay the land of the Lithuanian tribe of Prussi. The warlike Prussi made devastating raids upon the neighbouring Polish lands. The Polish feudal lords, unable to cope with the Prussi, asked the German Teutonic Order for aid. The Teutonic Order had been founded at the end of the 12th century to fight the Mohammedans in Palestine. With the sanction of the Pope, the Teutonic knights readily agreed to take up their abode in the land of the Prussi. The latter, who lived in small tribes under different chiefs, were not able to oppose the knights by a united force. The Germans, on the other hand, were a compact, disciplined force. Before long the little towns of the petty Prussi princes were conquered. "By the end of the 13th century," Marx says, "that flourishing country was transformed into a desert; forests and swamps appeared in the place of villages and cultivated fields; some of the people were killed, others were carried off, and the rest were compelled to migrate to Lithuania."*

The knights built castles and cities on the land of the Prussi and began to attract colonists from Germany. The Germans who aided the Teutonic Order in its wars against the Prussi received grants of land

* *Archives of Marx and Engels*, Russ ed , Vol. V, 1938, p 344.

and built new castles. And so ever greater numbers of German colonists poured into the land of the Prussi. The numerous outbreaks of the Prussi were suppressed because of the lack of unity among these people.

Both Orders (that of the Knights of the Sword and the Teutonic) united in 1237 with the aim of prosecuting their conquests jointly in the Baltic.

The merging of these two Orders appreciably strengthened the German knights and constituted a great danger to the Russian lands. Novgorod and Pskov were threatened. But the Russian people had to wage an arduous struggle simultaneously against the Germans and the Swedes. In the 13th century the people of Novgorod and Pskov saved the Russian lands from conquest by the German and Swedish feudal lords.

## 23. STRUGGLE OF NOVGOROD AND PSKOV AGAINST THE SWEDISH AND GERMAN FEUDAL LORDS

**The Victory on the Neva over the Swedes.** For a long time the Swedes had been trying to seize the water-route from the Gulf of Finland to the land of Novgorod, which would give them control over the entire trade with Eastern Europe.

In 1240 the Swedes launched a campaign on the Neva under the command of Count Birger, who governed the Swedish kingdom at that time. But no sooner had the Swedes landed near the mouth of the Neva than they were attacked by the Novgorod troops under the command of the Novgorod Grand Prince Alexander, son of Yaroslav. Alexander was one of the most outstanding princes of his time; he pursued a very cautious and wise policy with the Tatar khans and won the respect of the Golden Horde He was also a brave and skillful military commander. "While conquering, he was unconquerable," a contemporary said of him. In the battle of the Neva against the Swedes, fought under his command, the Novgorod people displayed great valour. One of them, Gavrila Oleksich, in pursuing the enemy, rode his horse over the gangplank right onto an enemy's ship. Thrown into the water together with his horse, he swam to the bank and once more rushed into the fray. Misha of Novgorod and his men sank three Swedish vessels. Savva made his way to Birger's tent and cut down the pole which supported it; the unexpected collapse of the tent in view of the combatants inspired the Russian troops. The Swedes were utterly defeated; Birger himself was almost killed by a blow from Alexander's lance, but saved his life by fleeing to his ships. The men of Novgorod pursued the retreating foe. For this victory on the Neva Prince Alexander won his honorific epithet of Nevsky.

Alexander was an imperious prince who realized that a strong rule was necessary in time of war. The Novgorod boyars, however, tried to



Battle on the Ice. *Laptev Chronicles*

limit his power. Soon after the victory on the Neva he came into conflict with the boyars and left Novgorod.

The Germans took advantage of Alexander's absence, seized the ancient Russian city of Izborsk and advanced on Pskov. Some of the boyars in the city proved to be traitors. Pskov was captured by a detachment of knights. The Germans invaded the land of Novgorod, built the fortress of Koporye, and made themselves masters of the land within thirty kilometres of Novgorod.

**The Battle on the Ice.** Under these circumstances the Novgorod *veche* demanded Alexander's return. He promptly answered the call and arrived at Novgorod with his retinue of warriors and an

auxiliary Suzdal detachment. He marched out and captured and destroyed the Koporye fortress. In 1242 he marched on Pskov, routed the German garrison and liberated the city. Then he invaded the lands of the Order. A powerful German army came out to meet him. The knights boasted: "We'll take Prince Alexander with our bare hands." The opening joust between the skirmish lines was not in Novgorod's favour. Alexander held a position of vantage on Lake Chudskoye (Lake Peipus). There, on the ice, on April 5, 1242, a battle took place which went down in history as the *Battle on the Ice*. The Germans attacked in their usual "pig's snout" formation, that is, a closed wedge. The point of the wedge was formed by a heavily armed body of horsed knights, fringing a body of foot soldiers, armed with spears and swords. The rear and flanks were protected by a detachment of mounted knights. The battle was, in the words of a chronicler, "a furious one"; the ice was stained with blood. The Novgorod men pursued the Germans for seven kilometres, killed 500 knights and took 50 prisoners. After this defeat the Germans hastened to conclude peace. They renounced Pskov and all their other conquests.

The Battle on the Ice ended the offensive of the German knights against Russian soil and saved it from the fate that overtook Livonia. The knights were driven back from the Russian frontier. This victory put a halt to the movement of the German feudal lords against Russian lands. The Russian people saved the Lithuanians, Esthonians and Latvians from destruction by the Germans.

## *Chapter VIII*

# THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

### 24. FORMATION OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

As economic ties among the various regions in Eastern Europe developed in the 14th century the petty feudal domains began to unite into large feudal states. The need for defence against external enemies accelerated this process. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was formed in this way and it incorporated not only the small Lithuanian but also the neighbouring Slavonic principalities.

**Union of the Lithuanian Tribes.** The Lithuanians, in the 12th century, had already emerged from the clan system. They broke up into separate tribes which were headed by petty chieftains, called *kunigasi*, who became prominent because of their wealth. These chieftains possessed large numbers of cattle and slaves and maintained a numerous retinue. The chieftains and their warriors lived in fortified

towns deep within the forest thickets. The union of the scattered Lithuanian tribes was hastened by the danger of attack by the German knights.

In the middle of the 13th century Mendowg was the most outstanding of the Lithuanian petty princes. By violence and cunning he removed the other princes, taking all the power into his own hands. He also seized several Russian frontier lands. His capital was the Russian city of Novgorodok. To win over the German knights Mendowg ostensibly adopted Christianity and even ceded a part of Lithuania to the Order. In exchange the Pope bestowed upon him the title of king. But when Mendowg became stronger, he renounced Christianity and his royal title, and at the head of a Lithuanian army invaded the domains of the Order, and inflicted a severe defeat upon the knights. Mendowg and his army invaded the land of the Prussi, ravaged it and the neighbouring regions of Poland as well By consolidating the union of Lithuania, Mendowg aroused the hostility of the other Lithuanian princes, who assassinated him (1263).

The consolidation of the Lithuanian tribes into a single state, which had begun under Mendowg, continued. The tribe of Lithuanians was the nucleus around which this state was formed It was gradually joined by other kindred tribes, with the exception of the Prussi, who had been conquered by the Teutonic knights and had in part been destroyed, and in part Teutonized. The land of the Prussi-Lithuanians became the land of the Germans-Prussians.

The Lithuanian state became especially strong in the beginning of the 14th century, under Gedymin (1316-1341), who adopted the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania. He already had a well-disciplined army which replaced the former popular levy. Gedymin's troops were acquainted with siegecraft, the use of siege engines and the art of assault. Castles after the German style were built to defend the land.

After the Lithuanian grand dukes had united Lithuania, they began to extend their power over the neighbouring Russian lands. The population of these regions regarded their annexation to Lithuania as a deliverance from the Tatar yoke. Polotsk had fallen under the influence of Lithuania as far back as the time of Mendowg. Gedymin further extended his dominions over Vitebsk, Minsk and several other lands. Gedymin was followed by his son Olgierd (1345-1377), who became the Grand Duke of Lithuania. He was "smooth-tongued"—as the Russian chronicles put it—a sly and crafty sovereign who knew where his advantage lay and adroitly executed his designs. Under him the Lithuanians seized Kiev, the land of Chernigov-Seversk and the greater part of the land of Volhynia. The Smolensk principality was annexed by the Lithuanians after Olgierd. In this way a large, powerful Lithuanian state, the capital of which was Vilnius, was created. The state of Lithuania included many Russian lands. Indeed,

the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was essentially a Russo-Lithuanian state ruled by Lithuanian princes and Lithuanian *pans*

Thus in the 14th century the Russian lands were divided into three parts. Northeastern Rūs (the lands of Vladimir-Suzdal and Novgorod) which was under the power of the Golden Horde, Southwestern Rūs (the principalities of Kiev, Chernigov, Smolensk, Polotsk, Vladimir-Volhynsk) which had come under the power of Lithuania, and the principality of Galich, which had been conquered by Poland in the middle of the 14th century. The ancient Russian nationality was similarly broken up into three divisions: Northeastern, Northwestern and Southwestern. Each division lived its own economic, political and cultural life. By the 15th century the Eastern Slavs formed three great peoples, each of which had its own language. The Slavs dwelling between the Oka and the Volga, and north of the Volga, with their political centre of Vladimir, formed the Velikoruss (Great Russian) or, as we now call them, the Russian nation; the Slavs living between the Pripyat and the Western Dvina, who were subject to Lithuania, formed the Byelorussian nation; in the South Russian lands, the centre of which was Kiev, the Ukrainian nation was formed.

**The Union of Lithuania and Poland.** Olgierd's successor to the Lithuanian throne was his son Jagiello (1377-1392). During his reign Lithuania united with her neighbour, Poland. It was the need for union in the struggle against the Teutonic Order that prompted both countries to join forces. Furthermore, Jagiello hoped by this means to increase his own power within the country. The Polish *pans*, finding it beyond their strength to fight against the Germans, proposed a matrimonial alliance between Jagiello and the Polish Queen, Yadviga, and thus unite Lithuania and Poland into a single state. To consolidate the union, Jagiello was to convert his subjects to Catholicism, which was the dominant religion in Poland. In 1385 a treaty was concluded, sealing the union (*unia*) of Lithuania and Poland. Jagiello simultaneously became the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the king of Poland.

The union, however, was opposed by the Lithuanians, who did not want to lose their independence. Jagiello's cousin, the ambitious and talented Witowt, stirred up an insurrection in order to gain Lithuanian's independence. Jagiello garrisoned the principal Lithuanian cities with Polish troops, but the inhabitants killed the Poles. Witowt (1392-1430) was given the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania, but he undertook not to sever relations with Poland and to accept Jagiello's suzerainty.

**Rout of the German Knights.** The union of Lithuania and Poland was prompted primarily by the danger of attack by the German knights. Having conquered the lands of the Prussi, the Teutonic knights strove to extend their power over the rest of Lithuania. More and more adventurers, greedy for plunder and land, kept coming to their aid

from Germany. In the 14th century the Germans conquered the lands of the Lithuanian tribe of Zhmuds, whom they had already attacked on other occasions. The Zhmuds lived along the lower reaches of the Niemen and were neighbours of the Prussi. The cruelties and extortions of the knights drove the Zhmuds to desperation and caused them to revolt time and again. They came out of the forests in throngs, attacked the newly built castles, set them on fire, massacred the garrisons or carried the men off as captives. They appealed to Witowt and other princes for help. "Listen to us, who are oppressed and tortured," they wrote. "The Order has brought us to such a point that we must either roam o'er the world or become bandits if we wish to exist. The knights have taken from us all the fruits of the earth and the honey of beehives, they neither permit us to kill animals nor catch fish nor trade with our neighbours. Every year they carry off our children as hostages, our elders have been carried off to Prussia, others with all their kin they have burned at the stake. Remember that we are people, and not beasts."

The advance of the Germans threatened the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and the neighbouring Russian principalities with the loss of their independence. Witowt pursued a dual policy in relation to the Germans: at times he signed peace treaties with them, and at others supported the insurgent Zhmuds. However, the German menace compelled Witowt in 1410, jointly with Jagiello, to come out openly against the knights. Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian regiments—the Smolensk, Polotsk, Kiev and others—comprised the main force of the united army. The encounter with the enemy took place in July between the villages of Grunewald and Tannenberg. In the beginning success was with the knights, but the situation was saved by the daring and reckless bravery of the Smolensk warriors. The Germans suffered a crushing defeat, losing 40,000 in killed and 15,000 in prisoners. The grand master of the Order himself fell in the battle. The victory of Grunewald, which was won thanks to the Russian regiments, halted the German advance eastward. From that time the Teutonic Order dropped into decay and lost all military and political significance. The significance of the Livonian Order also dwindled at the same time.

## 25. SOCIAL SYSTEM OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

**The Lithuanian Feudal Lords.** The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a feudal state, dominated by the powerful landowners. The foremost of them was the grand duke. He owned extensive "sovereign" lands. The peasants living on these estates worked under the corvée, and paid the grand duke quitrent in money and in kind. The peasants

who lived on the grand duke's lands were divided into freemen and bondsmen. The latter, if they tried to run away, were hunted and caught and returned to their master as fugitives. Besides the peasants the grand duke had free servants who lived on his estates and were obliged to render military service instead of the corvée and the payment of quitrent. Gradually these servants formed a group of small landowners called the *szlachta*. In addition to the grand duke there were other feudal lords in the Lithuanian duchy—princes and *pans* (nobles), and the church. These feudal lords were the supreme sovereigns on their estates. Most of the peasants living on their estates were serfs and had no right to transfer themselves to any other landowner. The rich feudal lords, like the grand duke, had free servants living on their land, and these were obliged to "render military service on horse and fully armed." Thus the population of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, both Lithuanian and Slavonic, was sharply divided into two classes. the feudal landowners and the peasants whom they exploited.

Possessing as they did large numbers of peasants and armed servants, the Lithuanian feudal lords were very powerful. The Grand Duke of Lithuania had to take their wishes into consideration. He had a special council of the great feudal lords (called the *pany-rada*), who sat in state with him. On more important occasions all the leading feudal lords convened at a general assembly (the *diet*).

**Cities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.** The Western Dvina, which flowed through the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, was a convenient route for trade with the Baltic countries. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania therefore had many rich trading cities. Outstanding among these, besides Vilnius, were the old Russian cities of Polotsk, Minsk (first mentioned in 1147), and Berestye. The cities on the Western Dvina enjoyed a specially flourishing trade after the Grunewald victory, which gave the Lithuanian merchants access to the Baltic Sea. The grand dukes of Lithuania derived a large income from this trade, and therefore tried to encourage it in every possible way. They freed the merchants in the big cities from many obligations and granted them self-government.

**Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Russian Lands in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.** The Lithuanian Grand Duchy was ethnically composed of Lithuanian and Slavonic lands. The latter included the lands of Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russia proper. The higher culture of the Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians exerted considerable influence on the Lithuanians. The faith of the Greek Orthodox church became widespread among the Lithuanians. State documents were written in the Russian language. *Russkaya Pravda* influenced Lithuanian law. After the union with Poland the situation changed. The Lithuanian *pans*, who had joined the Polish *pans*, began to persecute the Russian population in the duchy. The adoption

of Catholicism by the Lithuanian feudal lords marked the beginning of the persecution of the Russian Orthodox religion and Russian national culture. The Russian (Orthodox) feudal lords were deprived of the right to occupy any state posts in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Nor were they admitted to the grand duke's *rada* (council). Many of them adopted Polish ways and manners and embraced Catholicism, but the people clung to their native language and culture. When therefore the Russian state came into being in Northeastern Rūs the striving to unite with kindred Russian people was evinced by the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians no less strongly than by the Russians proper, all of whom were under Lithuanian domination

## *Chapter IX*

# THE GRAND PRINCIPALITY OF VLADIMIR

### 26. THE PRINCIPALITIES OF NORTHEASTERN RŪS

**Feudal Tenure in the 14th and 15th Centuries.** The 14th century marked the beginning of the union of the principalities of Northeastern Rūs into a single Russian state.

The main occupation of the people in Northeastern Rūs in the 13th and 14th centuries was husbandry. Important auxiliary branches of economy were fishing, hunting, and collecting the honey of wild bees. In some places salt was obtained by evaporation from subterranean springs. This was an article of trade with neighbouring regions. Theirs was a natural form of economy, that is, all articles of prime necessity (food, clothing, wooden articles) were made at home. Trade was poorly developed. People resorted to the market mainly for imported goods—articles that were not made at home. The chief wares were foreign goods which, because of their high cost, were beyond the reach of the masses and were purchased only by the feudal lords. The unfertile regions bought corn from lands where there was a surplus. In some places a low grade of iron ore was smelted; iron and ironware were also sometimes traded. Such was the commerce between the regions. With trade but poorly developed there was little money in circulation.

In the 14th century most of the land belonged to the feudal lords, both clerical and lay, *viz.*, the princes, their boyars and servants, the monasteries and other church institutions. The lands belonging to the feudal lords as their absolute property were called *votchini*, or patrimonial estates.

On their patrimonies the feudal lords were petty sovereigns. They had the right to hold court, and sit in judgment on all the people living on their lands; they could inflict corporal punishment, and even usurped the right of executing their subjects. They collected taxes and tolls from the people living on their patrimonies. The local prince could not interfere in the arrangements of the feudal lord, neither could he send to him his judges or his taxgatherers. The boyars and other feudal lords gave grants of land to their men in return for military service (fiefs). The feudal lords needed such a military retinue not only for purposes of war but also to keep the working population on their patrimonies in subordination.

The feudal lords endeavoured to increase the population of their patrimonies at the expense of the free peasantry. The monasteries were especially energetic in this respect.

Monasteries were usually founded in remote, sparsely populated places. The monks employed peasants to make forest clearings and prepare tillage grounds. The monasteries colonized vast uninhabited areas, thereby advancing the economic development of the country. But this colonization by the monasteries was attended by ruthless exploitation of the peasants who settled on the monastery lands. If there were any free peasants living near monastery estates, the monks contrived to wrest their land from them and compel them to work for the monastery.

Rich, populous monasteries acquired great political influence. In the 14th century the monk Sergei Radonezhsky founded the Monastery of the Troitsa (Trinity) near Moscow [the city that eventually sprang up around its wall is now called Zagorsk]. This once poor monastery, built in a remote forest, later became the richest of all the monasteries of Northeastern Rūs.

**Peasants in the 14th and 15th Centuries.** The peasants living on the land of a feudal lord performed all the work on his estate. They hauled timber for him, built the lord's manor, put up a palisade around his domain, dammed the ponds, ploughed the land, sowed, reaped and carted the rye to the lord's household, mowed hay, baked bread, brewed beer, spun flax furnished by the landowner, drove palings into the river for fishing, and helped him when hunting the bear, fox, elk, etc. Such were the feudal services they had to render their lords These services were called the corvée.

Besides the corvée, the peasants had to pay quitrent, the *obrok*. On important holidays the peasants brought their lord "whatever they had on hand": eggs, cheese, baked bread and a cow, or several sheep from each village Some times the corvée was completely replaced by the quitrent paid in rye and oats. When he landowner came to a village, the peasants had to feed him and his entire suite, offer them "beer in plenty, bread and drinks, fish and meat in plenty, and oats and hay

for the horses in plenty" The peasants had to render all these diverse, burdensome services without protest, because the feudal lord was master of the land on which they lived.

It was difficult for a peasant to get away from the feudal lord. If he left, he forfeited all his property. Furthermore, the landowners had agreed among themselves not to take in peasants who had left their masters. It often happened that the landowners retained their peasants forcibly. If, however, a peasant did succeed in getting away, he would usually fall into the same kind of thralldom under some other landowner.



Carting grain to the monastery. *From "The Life of Sergei Radonezhsky"*

The peasants lived in small, isolated villages. Each peasant family was a kind of separate little collective-producing unit It was difficult for them to unite for joint action. Occasional attempts at resistance were easily crushed.

However, there were lands that did not belong to the feudal lords. These were inhabited by so-called state peasants, the *chorniye*, who were more or less free. These peasants formed communities or, as they were then called, *volosts*. Every peasant who belonged to a *volost* had his own allotment and hay field, but the forests and other lands were the common property of the entire *volost*. But even these seemingly free peasants were actually in feudal dependence on their prince. They not only had to pay him tribute, but also had to do all kinds of work under the corvée: graze the prince's horses, mow his hay, help the prince's hunters and fishermen, feed not only the retinue of the prince, but also his dogs and hunting birds (falcons).

**Towns in the 14th and 15th Centuries.** So long as a natural economy predominated, the crafts and trade could not develop to any great extent in the towns. Foreign trade was in the hands of the frontier cities—Novgorod and Pskov In other large cities, such as Moscow and Tver, there were small groups of rich merchants who made their fortunes by buying and reselling foreign fabrics and other valuable merchandise. The local mairts were poorly connected. However, economic intercourse steadily grew. At the end of the 14th century Moscow was already a commercial city of considerable importance.



Tillage *From "The Life of Sergei Radonezhsky"*

**Splitting up into Appanages.** In the beginning of the 14th century Northeastern Rūs was broken up into several large principalities. The largest of them were. Tver, Moscow, Ryazan and, somewhat later, Nizhni Novgorod. Each of these principalities was ruled by a descendant of Vsevolod the "Large Nest."

The prevailing low stage of development of money-commodity relations between the various regions comprising the principalities hindered the establishment of close economic ties. And, consequently, strong political ties could not be established either. Each large principality was divided into appanages, that is, into small domains belonging to the various members of the prince's family. These appanages passed from father to son through inheritance.

The appanages increased in number and dwindled in size as the princely families multiplied. Each prince tried to enlarge his appanage at the expense of his neighbour. This led to interminable struggles among the rival princes over the possession of land and cities.

The senior member of the family—the father or oldest brother—bore the title of grand prince and was considered the chief prince. But as a matter of fact his authority over the junior members of the family was very slight. The appanage princes, as the younger princes were called, were absolutely independent in their own domains. "You attend to your patrimony, and I shall attend to mine," the grand prince said in his agreement with the appanage princes. The latter administered justice on their own appanages and collected their own taxes. Only in foreign policy was the appanage prince obliged to be "at one" with the grand prince and to come with his troops to his aid in case of war.

The government of the principality was simple. The principalities were not large. For instance, the Moscow principality at the end of the 13th century comprised three small towns besides Moscow. There were principalities which consisted of a single town and its rural environs. A painting of those days depicts the capital of the diminutive principality of Zaozerye, namely, the prince's manor with its church and the adjacent village. Each prince directed both state affairs and his own economy. The prince's troops consisted of boyars and the

prince's "free servants." Regiments of the appanage princes or their boyars joined the troops of the grand prince. The infantry was made up of a popular levy from the town and village population. On matters of prime importance the prince consulted with his boyars. Historians call such a conference the "boyar's duma."

The administration of various branches of the prince's economy was entrusted to different boyars. The prince appointed lord lieutenants to administer the various regions. They did not receive any salary in money but took for themselves a part of the income and "were fed" at the expense of the population of the region, that is, they received products in kind. This system of administration was called *kormleniye*—subsistence.

**The Grand Principality of Vladimir.** The numerous principalities into which Northeastern Rūs was divided were at first entirely disconnected. The constant danger of attack by the Golden Horde and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania compelled the population of the Russian principalities to join forces in the common struggle against the enemy. The Grand Principality of Vladimir became the centre around which the Russian principalities began to unite. It was the practice of the khan of the Golden Horde, according to an old custom, to appoint one of the Russian princes the "Grand Prince of Vladimir and of all Rūs," *i. e.*, the head of all others, and to endow him with a letter of investiture. The prince who bore this title annexed the city of Vladimir and its surrounding lands to his own domains.

The need of defence against the Tatars helped to strengthen the power of the Grand Prince of Vladimir. An alliance of princes was formed under his leadership, the allies undertaking to help one another against the Tatars and other foreign enemies. They introduced uniform custom duties on the frontiers of their possessions. This was evidence of the fact that already in the 14th century the economic isolation of the feudal principalities was vanishing, a circumstance which favoured the prospects of consolidation.

## 27. NOVGOROD AND PSKOV IN THE 14TH AND 15TH CENTURIES

Novgorod occupied a special position in relation to the Grand Principality of Vladimir—"the chief Russian republic ruling in Northern Russia," as Marx wrote. Since the end of the 13th century Novgorod no longer elected its own princes. The Grand Prince of Vladimir was nominally considered the prince of Novgorod. When he assumed his office as ruler of Novgorod, he had to conform to the ancient custom of "kissing the cross" (*i. e.*, taking the oath), that he would observe the chartered liberties of Novgorod. The grand prince himself rarely came

to Novgorod, but sent his lord lieutenants there. Actually Novgorod was governed by city magistrates elected from among the Novgorod boyars.

In the 14th century Novgorod became an aristocratic feudal republic. The head of this republic was Novgorod's leading feudal lord—the archbishop, who was elected by the *veche*. The Novgorod archbishop owned immense estates and had his own troops. Nothing was done in Novgorod without the consent of the archbishop, who also negotiated with foreign envoys. He upheld the authority and prestige of the boyars in Novgorod in every way he could.

All affairs were first considered at a council of the boyar élite, who assembled under the chairmanship of the archbishop. The merchants, who made their fortunes on fur deals and from their trade with the Hanse and Russian lands were another influential factor in Novgorod politics in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Novgorod merchants served as intermidiaries between the boyars and the German merchants. They supported the boyars.

The power of the boyars grew in proportion as their affluence increased. Their wealth was derived from the exploitation of the non-Russian population of Pomorye (the Maritime Region) and of the Russian peasants and craftsmen. A fierce class struggle was going on in Novgorod. In 1418 an uprising broke out here as a result of the oppression by the boyar usurers. A certain Stepanko seized hold of the boyar Daniel Ivanovich Bozhin on the street and began shouting: "Men, help me with this villain " A crowd gathered. The boyar was dragged to the Volkhov Bridge and thrown into the river, where he escaped drowning by a lucky chance. He caught Stepanko and dragged him to the torture chamber. At that some one struck the *veche* bell on the Torgovaya side. The crowd rushed to the street where Bozhin lived, plundered his house and moved on, sacking the homes of other boyars and saying: "They are our enemies." The boyars' granaries were also pillaged. The boyars on the Sofiiskaya side armed themselves and repelled the assailants. From both sides people came running to the Volkhov Bridge armed and accoutred as though for war. Indeed some people had already been killed. But the Novgorod archbishop intervened, and accompanied by his prelates, hastened to the scene of battle. Being one of the wealthiest feudal lords of Novgorod, the archbishop was interested in the speediest termination of the outbreak. His intervention saved the boyars.

In the middle of the 14th century Pskov became independent of Novgorod. At the *veche* the Pskov burghers elected their own city magistrates from among the Pskov boyars. Like Novgorod, Pskov was subject to the Grand Prince of Vladimir, who sent his lord lieutenants to that city. Here, as in Novgorod, a relentless class struggle was in progress.

# *Chapter X*

# THE RISE OF MOSCOW

## 28. STRENGTHENING OF THE MOSCOW PRINCIPALITY

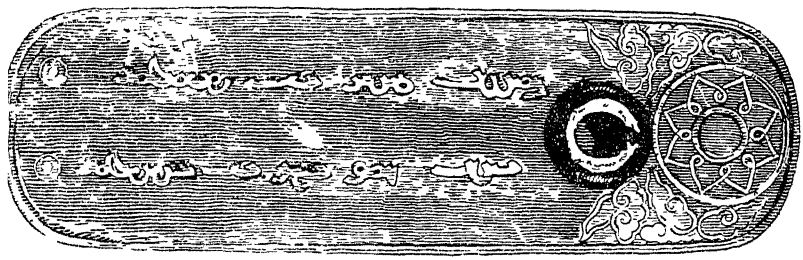
**Moscow and Tver in the Beginning of the 14th Century.** In the first quarter of the 14th century a bitter struggle for the Grand Principality of Vladimir broke out between two of the most powerful principalities of Northeastern Rūs—Tver and Moscow. Both of these principalities occupied a favourable geographic position. They were less open to attack by the Tatars since they were shielded on the southeast by other principalities, and afforded refuge to fugitives from the ravaged regions. The growth of productive forces in the Tver and Moscow principalities was more rapid than in the other regions of Northeastern Rūs.

Tver was situated on the Volga at its confluence with the Tvertsa River. The city controlled the entire trade route from Novgorod to the Volga. Novgorod merchants travelled by the Tvertsa to Northeastern Rūs. The Volga was the trade route of Tver merchants dealing with eastern countries.

Moscow was situated on the River Moskva, a tributary of the Oka. A direct road from the Upper Volga to the Oka passed through the Moscow principality. From here one could travel to the upper reaches of the Don, down to the Azov and the Black seas and to the Crimea for trade with the Italian trading colonies which existed there at the time.

The advantage of Moscow lay in its central position, which enabled it to fight both against the Tatars and Lithuania, and also made it easier for Moscow to unite all the separate principalities of Northeastern Rūs.

Moscow became the capital of a separate principality at the end of the 13th century after the establishment of the Tatar yoke. At that time the Moscow principality was very small, and comprised Moscow proper and two other cities—Ruza and Zvenigorod. In 1301 the Moscow prince, Daniel (son of Alexander Nevsky) took possession of Kolomna, which stands at the confluence of the Moskva and the Oka. In 1302 he inherited the neighbouring principality of Pereyaslavl, to which Moscow had once been subject, and thus greatly added to Moscow's power. Nevertheless Tver was the stronger at first. The Grand Prince of Tver, Mikhail Yaroslavich, in the beginning of the 14th century, received a letter of investiture from the Tatars bestowing upon him the Grand Principality of Vladimir.



Paitsa of the Uzbek Khan—silver emblem of authority *Historical Museum (Moscow)*
Translation from the Arabic. "Under the power of the great Heavens, the protection of all greatness and splendour He who is guilty of not submitting to the command of Uzbek must die"

The Tatars' policy was to weaken Rūs and not allow any one prince to enhance his power at the expense of another. Uzbek Khan, one of the most powerful khans since Batu, fearing the growing power of the Grand Prince of Vladimir, supported the Moscow Prince Yuri Danilovich (1303-1325) against him. The khan gave his sister in marriage to Yuri and also placed Tatar troops at his disposal to fight against the Grand Prince of Tver. In spite of the Tatar help, Yuri suffered a severe defeat. His wife, Uzbek's sister, was taken prisoner. She died in captivity, and Yuri took advantage of this fact to accuse Mikhail before the khan of having poisoned her. He succeeded in having Mikhail sentenced to death, while he himself received the cherished letter of investiture to the grand principality. But he himself soon fell at the hands of one of Mikhail's sons. Uzbek executed Yuri's murderer, but nevertheless bestowed the grand principality on another of Mikhail's sons, Prince Alexander Mikhailovich.

**Ivan Danilovich Kalita.** In Moscow Yuri was succeeded by his brother, Ivan Danilovich (1325-1341), surnamed Kalita, meaning "moneybag," on account of his wealth. Ivan Kalita was a shrewd and crafty sovereign. He had no scruples about the means he employed to achieve his ends and to strengthen Muscovy. He was greatly assisted by the church. The Russian metropolitans at that time resided in Vladimir, and not in Kiev, which had been ruined by the Tatars. Yuri Danilovich and Ivan Kalita succeeded in winning over the metropolitan Peter. He transferred his seat from Vladimir to Moscow, and ever since Moscow has been the religious centre of Russia. In the person of the metropolitan the Moscow prince acquired a powerful ally. The church used all its religious influence to consolidate the power of the Moscow princes. The threat of the metropolitan's malediction was sufficient to compel the neighbouring princes to submit to Moscow's will. Further-

more, the church possessed vast populated lands and was in a position to help the Moscow princes with money and troops.

While endeavouring to win the sympathy and support of the church, Ivan Kalita at the same time did not grudge his amassed riches when it was a question of bribing the khan, his wives and his retinues. Soon he had an opportunity of gaining possession of the grand principality, with the aid of the Tatars. In 1327 the khan's envoy, Cholkhan (Shchelkan, as Russian folk songs called him), came to Tver with a large Tatar force. The Tatars began to pillage the city, causing an outbreak among the populace. Grand Prince Alexander himself headed the rebels. Cholkhan and his Tatars were wiped out. Ivan Kalita hastened to the Horde and offered the khan his services to punish the rebels. With a large Tatar army he invaded the principality of Tver and desolated it. Grand Prince Alexander Mikhailovich took refuge in Pskov. However, the metropolitan Theognost threatened the Pskov people with excommunication if they did not deliver the grand prince; the latter therefore fled to Lithuania. Later Alexander returned to Tver and managed to obtain the khan's pardon. Instigated, however, by Ivan Kalita the khan later summoned Alexander to the Horde and had him put to death.

The Moscow prince achieved his goal In 1328, after the suppression of Tver, the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir was bestowed upon him. The khan granted him the right to collect the Tatar tribute from all of Rūs and to deliver it in person to the Horde. This greatly increased Ivan Kalita's importance among the other Russian princes, and he exercised a certain authority over them. On the other hand, he became more independent of the Tatars. He appropriated some of the tribute, thus enriching himself. Ivan Kalita considerably expanded his possessions at the expense of the other princes. Tenacious and unscrupulous, he diligently enlarged his possessions, sometimes by purchase, sometimes by violence. He made adroit use of the Tatars to increase his own power. As Marx said, Ivan Kalita used the khan as a weapon by means of which he rid himself of his most dangerous rivals and removed every obstacle that hampered his seizure of power.

At the time of his death Ivan Kalita left a fairly large principality. His brother Yuri and he himself had added Mozhaisk and several other towns to the possessions they had inherited from their father. Now the Moskva River all along its course from Kolomna to Mozhaisk belonged to the Moscow princes. Thus was built up the territory of the future Russian realm.

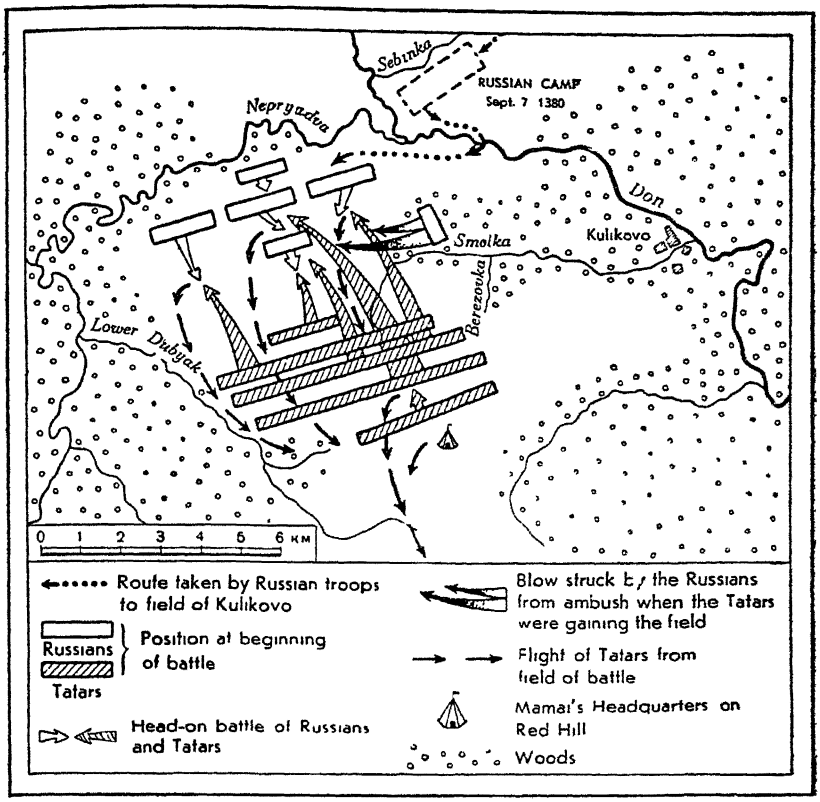
Ivan Kalita was so powerful that he succeeded in establishing a certain amount of order in his principality. The chronicler assures us that under him "a great peace settled over the entire Russian land and the Tatars ceased to war against it." And within the principality itself brigandage diminished and life became safer.

## 29 BEGINNING OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TATARS

**Dimitry Donskoi.** The increase of Muscovy continued after the death of Ivan Kalita. The Grand Principality of Vladimir remained all the time in the hands of Ivan Kalita's descendants. Only in 1359, when his second son, Ivan II, died and the Moscow throne passed to the latter's young son, Dimitry Ivanovich (1350-1389), did the neighbouring princes attempt to dispossess the young Moscow prince of the grand principality. The metropolitan Alexei and the Moscow boyars succeeded in getting the Horde to confirm their prince as the grand prince; they placed the boy Dimitry in the saddle and marched against their rival, the prince of Suzdal. Moscow was victorious and Dimitry recovered Vladimir.

Under Dimitry Muscovy became extremely powerful. He fortified his capital, Moscow, building a stone wall round it in place of the former oak wall (1366). He prosecuted a vigorous policy of gaining supremacy over the other principalities and "brought all the Russian princes under his will." He had to wage a prolonged war against the neighbouring principalities of Tver, Ryazan and Nizhni Novgorod. Dimitry's enemies sought help from the Lithuanian Grand Duke, Olgierd, who thrice marched against Moscow, but the patriotism of the Muscovites and the stone wall of the capital made it impregnable. The boyars and clergy, and especially the metropolitan Alexei, helped Dimitry considerably.

**Annexation of the Lands of the Vychegda Komi People.** Dimitry continued to extend the rule of Muscovy to the lands inhabited by non-Russian peoples. In the Ural region, on the Vychegda River, a tributary of the North Dvina, and on the upper reaches of the Kama lived the Zyryane (Komi) and their kindred tribe the Permiaks. The country of these people was covered with forests teeming with fur-bearing animals. The Komi were skilled trappers. They lived in tribes and were ruled by petty princes. They were heathens, who worshipped sacred trees and hung the skins of bears and other offerings on the branches. Similar offerings filled their shrines—little huts in which they kept crudely made effigies of their gods. Intercourse with the land of the Komi had long been kept up through Russian merchants who used to go there to buy furs. With the support of the Grand Prince Dimitry a monk by the name of Stefan proceeded to convert the Komi to Christianity. Stefan destroyed the heathen shrines and built an Orthodox church on the site of an especially revered sacred birch. He invented an alphabet for the Komi people and translated scriptural books into the Komi language. This attempt to create a Komi literature found no support among the ignorant Muscovy clergy. The adoption of Christianity threatened the Komi with enslavement. Stefan, who was appointed bishop to their




The Battle of Kulikovo (September 8, 1380)

land, built a fortified town at the confluence of the Vym and Vychegda. The surrounding lands and the fisheries were alienated and declared the property of the bishop. The latter became a sort of lord over the entire land with the population as his feudal dependants. While spreading Christianity, the bishop also extended the power of the Moscow Grand Prince. Moscow taxgatherers came to Vychegda and fleeced the local population.

**The Battle of Kulikovo.** Under Dimitry the Grand Principality of Moscow grew so strong that it even took up the cudgels against the Tatars. The entire Russian people supported Dimitry in this undertaking. While Muscovy was becoming more powerful, the Golden Horde became increasingly weakened by internal dissensions and feudal disintegration. In various parts of the Golden Horde independent khans appeared, who contended among themselves for power. The

mightiest of the Tatar feudal lords was Prince Mamai (commander of a thousand) who ruled over the largest part of the Horde.

In 1378 the Tatar army sent by Mamai invaded the land of Ryazan in order to advance thence against Moscow, but it sustained a serious defeat on the Vozha River. Mamai then concluded an alliance with the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jagiello. Mamai marched out with a large host. The Grand Prince of Ryazan leagued himself with Mamai in the hope of securing the downfall of Muscovy by aid of the Horde.

Dimitry collected an army of 150,000 men. A large number of Russian princes rallied under his banner. Two Lithuanian princes, sons of Olgierd, in the company of Byelorussian and Lithuanian warriors, also joined Dimitry. At the head of a mustered force Dimitry crossed the Oka and went as far as the Don. Here he held a military council. A hot dispute ensued. Some said: "Go on beyond the Don, Prince!" Others objected: "Don't go, for we have many enemies." Dimitry sided with the more daring. His troops crossed the Don. On September 8, 1380, a decisive battle which has gone down in history as the Mamai Battle or the Battle of Kulikovo, was fought on the vast Kulikovo Field, at the mouth of the Nepryadva River. Russians and Tatars stood facing each other on the hills that fringed the field. As soon as the morning mist lifted, both armies descended to Kulikovo Field. Turning to his troops with words of cheer, Dimitry addressed himself not only to the princes and the boyars, but also the "younger humble people, peasant sons from small to great," who constituted the bulk of his army. The battle began. An area of several miles was saturated with blood; the ground was strewn with corpses; horses stumbled over the dead bodies, men died under the horses' hoofs or were crushed in the fray. At first the Tatars had the upper hand. But a body of Russian troops, led by Dimitry's cousin, Vladimir Andreyevich of Serpukhov and Dimitry's waywode Volhynsky-Bobrok was lying in ambush. The men, impatient to join the fray, asked: "Are we going to stand here much longer? What help are we to them?" But Bobrok restrained his men because, as the chronicles tell us, the wind was against them. When the wind changed he said: "Now's the time!" The regiment rushed into battle. The appearance of fresh forces in the rear of the Tatars at the crucial moment of the battle decided the issue in favour of the Russians. The Tatars took to their heels, hotly pursued by the Russians, who captured the Tatar camp. For his victory on Kulikovo Field on the Don, Dimitry was called Dimitry Donskoi (Dimitry of the Don).

Shortly after this Mamai was killed in a battle against a new khan, Toktamish. After vanquishing Mamai, Toktamish, in 1382, attacked Moscow unexpectedly. Taken unawares, the Grand Prince Dimitry left for the north to muster an army. The boyars wanted to follow him in order to flee from the city, whereupon a rebellion broke out in Moscow. The Moscow inhabitants placed a guard at the gates of the Kremlin



The Battle of Kulikovo *From "The Life of Sergei Radonezhsky"*

and did not permit anyone to leave, except the grand princess and the metropolitan. When the Tatars tried to assault the Kremlin the inhabitants of Moscow poured boiling water over the enemy, hurled stones at them and shot them down with firearms. Toktamish was unable to take Moscow by storm. After a battle that lasted three days the Tatars entered into negotiations, and secured Moscow's surrender by a stratagem and a promise that the city would not be harmed. But hardly had the gates been opened than the Tatars tore into the Kremlin, killed all its defenders, sacked the city and then gave it over to the flames. After this setback, Rūs had to pay tribute to the Tatars as before.

Though the battle of Kulikovo had not yet freed Northeastern Rūs from the Tatar yoke, its significance, nevertheless, was great, for it showed that the rout of the Tatars was inevitable if the forces of the Russian people were united. Moscow became the centre of the struggle for national independence. The battle of Kulikovo was proof that in the east of Europe ". . . the necessity of taking defensive measures against the invasions of the Turks, Mongols and other Oriental peoples demanded that centralized states capable of withstanding the onslaught of the invaders be formed without delay." *

## 30. THE FEUDAL STRUGGLE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 15TH CENTURY

**Annexation of the Principality of Nizhni Novgorod.** During the reign of Grand Prince Vasili I (1389-1425), son of Dimitry Donskoi, the principality of Nizhni Novgorod was annexed to Muscovy. Vasili purchased an investiture from the khan giving him the right to this principality. But the fate of Nizhni Novgorod was spelt not by the khan's charter but by the Nizhni Novgorod feudal lords, who found it more to their advantage to serve the more powerful Grand Prince of Moscow. As soon as the troops of Muscovy approached Nizhni Novgorod, the boyars of the city declared to their prince: "Lord Prince, do not count on us, we are no longer thine, and are not with thee, but against thee." The prince of Nizhni Novgorod was seized and exiled. Nizhni Novgorod was annexed by Muscovy and with it the lands along the Oka, inhabited by Mordvinians.

**Victory of the Grand Prince over the Appanage Princes in the Principality of Moscow.** Vasili Dimitrievich left his son, the Grand Prince Vasili Vasilievich (1425-1462), a large and powerful principality, so superior to all the others in size and material resources that the possibility of a struggle against him was out of the question.

It now remained to put an end to feudal dissensions within the Moscow principality itself. The reign of Vasili Vasilievich was marked by sanguinary family feuds. Vasili's uncle, the appanage Prince Yuri Dimitrievich, contested the title of grand prince. The khan settled the dispute in Vasili's favour. Open war broke out between the princes, the struggle lasting about twenty years The sons of Yuri Dimitrievich—Vasili *Kosoi* (the Squint-eyed) and Dimitry Shemyaka (the Unjust)—took an active part in it. Moscow passed from hand to hand several times. Once when the grand prince went on a pilgrimage to the monastery of the Troitsa (Trinity) a detachment of Shemyaka's soldiers rode up to the monastery in sleighs, concealed under matting, took the guard by surprise and broke into the courtyard. Vasili was carried off

* Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Eng. ed., Moscow, 1940, p. 87.

to Moscow and blinded, whence he received the epithet *Tyomni* (the Blind). He was exiled to Uglich. Very soon, however, the vassals of the former grand prince began to rally about him in throngs. The blind Vasili advanced with them against Moscow. Shemyaka came out against him with his troops. A battle took place and Shemyaka, defeated, was forced to flee. A few years later he was poisoned. With the death of Shemyaka the struggle ended. In this civil strife Grand Prince Vasili was supported not only by the feudal lords and the clergy, but also by the peasants and craftsmen, who had suffered greatly from the feudal wars. Shemyaka is described in the folk tales about the *Shemyakin Sud* (the Unjust Trial) as an avaricious man and venal judge.

The victory of Vasili the Blind over the appanage princes of Muscovy marked a very important stage in the process of terminating feudal dissension and uniting all the Russian lands into a single Russian state. Internal family feuds did not stop the further strengthening of the Moscow principality because at that time the majority of the feudal lords, and especially the free servants and the church, needed a strong state which would protect their interests, ensure their right to the land, defend these lands against enemy invasion, and keep their peasants in submission. This explains why the immediate vassals of the Grand Prince of Muscovy supported him so wholeheartedly. And for both the townspeople and the peasants, a united feudal state was better than the former isolated feudal domains. A strong united state ensured them the peace they did not have during the continuous internecine feudal wars of the princes.

The development of trade gradually put an end to the economic isolation of the separate principalities. The need to fight the Tatars rallied the Russian people under the banner of the most powerful of the princes—the Grand Prince of Muscovy. The disunited feudal principalities were gradually merged into a single feudal state.

**Life and Culture in Northeastern Rūs in the 14th and the Beginning of the 15th Centuries.** The destructive activities of the Tatars retarded the cultural development of Northeastern Rūs. The Tatar raids and incessant feudal wars grievously affected the life of the toiling masses. Besides paying tribute to the Golden Horde, the peasant and urban population was cruelly exploited by their own feudal lords. The law of the strong reigned supreme. The feudal lords, supported by their military retinues, plundered and exercised an arbitrary power, in defiance of their own princes. Source material tells, for instance, of a certain Luka Kolotsky, a Mozhaisk landowner of humble origin who had grown rich and built himself a handsome manor, no less splendid than that of a prince, he gathered about him a retinue of warriors, feasted, hunted, and kept many falcons, hounds and tame bears. He behaved like a despot. Once when the huntsmen of the Mozhaisk prince were following the chase, Kolotsky fell upon them and beat them, and

took their falcons and dogs. To the prince's envoys he replied arrogantly and defiantly. It was this kind of tyranny of the feudal lords that the peasants most of all suffered from.

To keep the peasants in submission, the princes resorted to such cruel methods of punishment as flogging, cutting out tongues, lopping off ears, gouging out eyes. No less cruel were the princes to each other in their struggle for land and power.

The 14th century has not handed down any monuments of art or great works of literature, such as have come down from the 11th and 12th centuries, before the Tatar invasion. There were few literate people: Grand Prince Vasili the Blind himself was "bookless and unlettered." Crude superstitions and belief in witchcraft were still prevalent among the people. Those suspected of witchcraft were burnt at the stake. Nevertheless cultural life did not die out completely. At the metropolitan's court the compilation of annals still continued. The struggle for national independence was reflected in tales which described the exploits of Alexander Nevsky (*zhitiye, i.e.*, the biography, of Prince Alexander) and the victory of the Russians on Kulikovo Field (*Tale of the Mamai Battle*). In Novgorod, which was little affected by the Tatar invasion, the construction of public buildings and of churches ornamented with magnificent mural paintings, continued in the 14th and 15th centuries. A splendid palace with a tall spire was built in the 15th century by the Novgorod bishop.

In the beginning of the 15th century the famous icon painter, Andrei Rublyev, worked in Moscow. The icons painted by him, remarkable for their composition and delicacy of colouring, can be seen today in our museums.

## *Chapter XI*

# THE EMPIRE OF TIMUR AND THE DECLINE OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

### 31. THE EMPIRE OF TIMUR. THE UZBEKS

**Conquest of Samarkand by Timur.** During the second half of the 14th century the Golden Horde began to manifest signs of feudal disintegration. The Tatar princes, owners of separate domains, no longer owed fealty to the khan of the Golden Horde. The feudal lords deposed undesirable khans and set up others of their own choice. It was not rare for several rival khans at once to contend with each other for power. A serious blow was dealt the Golden Horde at the end of

the 14th century by the formation in Central Asia of the empire of Timur, which seized some of the dominions of the Golden Horde.

The process of feudalization made great strides in Central Asia in the 14th century. Large feudal estates sprang into existence. The peasantry was heavily burdened by the services it was obliged to render the khans and other feudal lords, who were constantly at war with the khans. The eastern section of the Chagatai domain separated and formed a kingdom of its own, called Mogolistan. In western Chagatai there was a preponderance of Turkic tribes and the Mongols living there came under their influence. In the middle of the 14th century a Mongol-Turkic feudal lord, Timur, called the Lame (Tamerlane) came into prominence. Around him rallied a retinue of several hundred warriors, with whom he entered the service of the lord of Samarkand, Hosain, and became the companion of his campaigns.

At that time Samarkand was a big, rich city with a large population of craftsmen and tradespeople. After the invasion of the Mongols the city had lost its fortress walls and lay exposed on all sides. The Samarkand artisans suffered much from the oppression of their native feudal lords. In 1365 the Mongols of Mogolistan advanced against Samarkand. Hosain and Timur fled. The inhabitants of Samarkand united to organize their defence. The civilian population was headed by a cotton cleaner Abu-Bekr-Kelevi. With the help of the workpeople of the city he seized the power and organized the defence of Samarkand. After a protracted struggle he succeeded in repelling the Mongols. After their victory the people of the city retained the power in their own hands. But the following year Hosain and Timur returned. With flattering promises they inveigled Abu-Bekr to their camp and seized him. Abu-Bekr was executed.

In 1370 Timur overthrew Hosain and took possession of Samarkand, Bokhara and the whole country between the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. He created a strong army of Chagatai nomads, and embarked upon the conquest of neighbouring territories.

**The Conquests of Timur.** Timur cherished the ambition of creating a world empire. "The whole area of the inhabited world", he said, "is not worth having two monarchs." He conquered Khoresm, the chief city of which—Urgenj—was a trade rival of Samarkand. Urgenj, on Timur's orders, was levelled with the ground. Part of its population was transported to Samarkand, and the site on which Urgenj had stood was sown with barley. Then Timur advanced against Persia. This campaign lasted five years and ended with the subjugation of Persia. At that time the Golden Horde was united under the rule of Khan Toktamish. Khoresm had but recently been a dominion of the Horde. Toktamish, taking advantage of Timur's absence—the latter was engaged in the Persian campaign—invaded Khoresm. The population sided with him, but Timur hurriedly returned from his campaign,

and, after punishing rebellious Khoresm, he marched to Toktamish's dominions in Western Siberia and routed him.

At the end of the 14th century Timur invaded Transcaucasia, devastated Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, and besieged the Georgian king, Bagrat, in Tbilisi. The Georgians made a desperate sally. "Like falcons at a flock of cranes, like a lion at a herd of bulls" the Georgians flung themselves upon the foe, but to no avail. In spite of the defenders' courageous resistance, Timur took Tbilisi by storm. King Bagrat was taken prisoner. But Timur had hardly gone before the Georgians rebelled again. Bagrat promised to make his land submit to Timur's rule if the latter released him. Timur permitted him to go to Georgia, where Bagrat immediately joined the rebels. The Georgians ambushed the enemy in a narrow ravine, and wiped them out, whereupon Timur moved an even greater army against the Georgians. Georgia was utterly devastated and compelled to submit.

Timur's encroachments had brought his territories quite close to the dominions of the Golden Horde. Toktamish attempted to stem the tide of this advance, but suffered a crushing defeat on the Terek (1395). Timur invaded the territory of the Golden Horde, destroyed Sarai, marched to the then Russian frontier city of Yelets, destroyed it, and returned to Transcaucasia. Timur's last years were spent in completing the conquest of Persia and his expedition into India (1398-1399). This was succeeded by his war with the Turks, which ended in the capture of the Turkish sultan, Bayezid (1402).

Timur was notorious for his ferocious cruelty. He mercilessly punished any attempt at resistance. Nothing but desolation and ruins remained as witnesses of his conquests. The populations of the captured cities were almost completely massacred. Only the artisans were spared to be driven off into captivity.

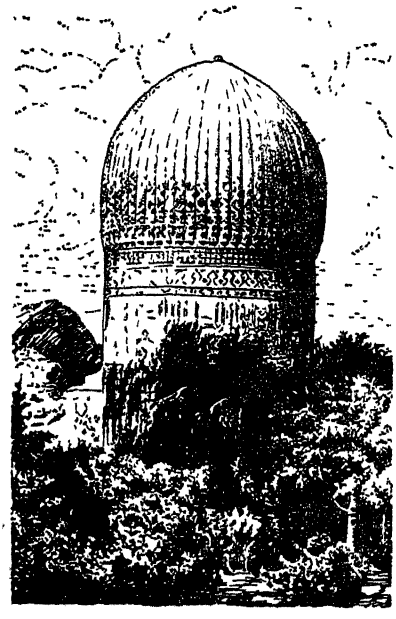
As a monument to his victories Timur had pyramids made of the skulls of his slain enemies.

The conquered territories of Timur formed a vast feudal kingdom. Timur shared his dominions among his sons and grandsons. The feudal lords did not cultivate their own lands but rented them out in small lots to the peasants, who had to pay quitrent and render services under the corvée.

The capital of Timur's empire was Samarkand. Here he built many magnificent buildings, the ruins of which have been preserved to the present day. Timur had a broad avenue with shops on both sides laid out in place of the narrow crooked streets. A water-supply system for the city was organized. Blossoming gardens surrounded Samarkand. Under Timur the city became the centre of a large caravan trade. It was also an important centre for the crafts inasmuch as Timur had brought over all the artisans from the conquered cities to Samarkand.



Timur on his throne. *From a Persian miniature*



The tomb of Timur in Samarkand
14th century

Timur's grandson, Ulugh Beg, was the most outstanding of his successors. He was a patron of science and poetry, and built a splendid observatory near Samarkand, in which very exact scientific observations were made In the 14th and 15th centuries the science of astronomy was on a considerably higher level in Uzbekistan than it was in Western Europe. The famous poet and philosopher, Navoyi, the author of the well-known poem "Farkhad and Shirin," and other works, lived in Ulugh Beg's reign.

**The Uzbeks and Kirghiz.** After Timur's death (1405) his empire fell apart. Intestine warfare broke out among his heirs.

A decisive blow was dealt the Timur empire by the Uzbeks, who constituted a union of various Turkic tribes (including the Polovtsi) that roamed the steppes of Central Asia. The Uzbeks had formerly been part of the Golden Horde, and called themselves Uzbeks after Uzbeg, khan of the Golden Horde. Their chief occupation was herding.

In the beginning of the 16th century the Uzbeks united under the rule of Sheibani Khan. During his reign they penetrated the country between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, began to settle in the fertile valleys and engage in agriculture. Sheibani conquered Samarkand (about 1500), then Bokhara, and subjugated all the possessions of Timur's descendants.

However, the Uzbeks did not form a centralized state; their domains were divided into several principalities, each ruled by a sultan and all of them constantly at war with each other. Under the Uzbek khans Samarkand lost its importance, and Bokhara became the capital. An independent Uzbek khanate was also organized in the 16th century at Khiva.

We find mention in the 16th century not only of the Uzbeks, but also of the Kirghiz. They are supposed to have come to Central Asia from the upper reaches of the Yenisei River. Some of the Kirghiz con-

tinued to live along the Yenisei even in the 17th century. In Central Asia the Kirghiz inhabited the territory of the present-day Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic.

## 32. PEOPLES OF THE VOLGA REGION UNDER THE RULE OF THE TATARS

**The Kazan Khanate.** In the 15th century, as a result of the development of feudal relations in various of its regions, the Golden Horde broke up into several independent khanates. The local feudal lords, who exploited the agricultural and nomad pastoral population, grew stronger. They strove to become politically independent of the Golden Horde. Timur's invasion proved to be the final blow, from which the Golden Horde was never to recover.

Thus, not far from the confluence of the Kama and the Volga, on the site of the former Bulgar kingdom there arose in the 15th century the Kazan khanate. In 1437 one of the Golden Horde khans, Ulugh Mahommed, who had been banished by his brother, crossed the Russian frontier with his horde and expressed his readiness to serve Grand Prince Vasili the Blind. His offer being rejected, he crossed the Volga, occupied the Bulgar town of Kazan, and killed the ruling petty prince.

The capital of the new khanate, the city of Kazan, stood on the steep bluffs of the River Kazanka, and was protected by wooden walls and surrounding swamps. After the conquest of the Middle Volga by the Tatars, the native inhabitants of the Kazan territory—the Bulgars—intermingled with the conquerors and formed the nucleus of the khanate population, which later was supplemented by an influx of Tatars from other Tatar lands. As distinct from the steppe regions, where nomad herding prevailed, the chief occupation of the inhabitants of the Kazan territory, ever since the Bulgars, was agriculture. The Volga and its tributaries abounded in fish, and the neighbouring forests in fur-bearing animals and bees. Fishing, hunting, and collecting the honey of wild bees were therefore also a very important sphere of economy. Rich pasture lands permitted the raising of large herds. The products of livestock breeding were articles of trade. Kazan leather, an item of export, was famous. Slaves, too, were an article of export. The Kazan Tatars made raids on the Russian border regions and carried off numerous captives. Some of these captives had to till the soil of the Tatar feudal lords; others were sold to visiting merchants An annual fair was held on Gostinoy Island on the Volga, to which came merchants from Russia, Persia, Bokhara and Khiva.

The power in the Kazan khanate was in the hands of the feudal landowners. At their head stood the khan; the princes (*beks*) and the

nobles (called *murzi* in Tatar) were subject to him. The Moslem clergy were also feudal lords. The highest dignitary of the church was called a *seid*. The clergy in Kazan were very influential. The khan himself dismounted from his horse when he met a *seid*. The khan and other feudal lords collected tribute in the form of money, honey and other products from the "black people," *i.e.*, the masses.

In the early years of its existence the Kazan khanate was a fairly powerful kingdom. The Kazan khan, Ulugh Mahommed, was for a short time in possession even of Nizhni Novgorod. At Suzdal the Kazan Tatars inflicted a telling defeat on Vasili the Blind the Grand Prince of Muscovy, taking him prisoner. He was liberated only for a large ransom. But later, internal dissension greatly weakened the Kazan khanate. There was no unity among the Kazan feudal lords, and a furious struggle raged for the power and for tribute. Groups of rival feudal lords alternately deposed khans and placed new ones on the throne. The enemies of the Kazan khanate—Muscovy and the Crimea—took advantage of this struggle to interfere in the affairs of the khanate and they placed their own creatures on the Kazan throne.

**The Volga Region under the Rule of the Tatars.** The Mordvinian, Mari, Udmurt and Chuvash peoples, who had long lived in the Middle Volga region, were under the power of the Tatars. All these peoples had taken up agriculture, but hunting and the collecting of honey still remained an important pursuit. After the Tatar conquest these peoples had to pay tribute in the form of marten skins, honey and money. By this time the clan system had already disintegrated among the Mari, Mordvinians, Chuvashes and Udmurts, who were governed by the descendants of tribal princelings. These princelings quickly assimilated Tatar ways and customs, intermingled with the Tatar feudal lords and together with them exploited their own tribesmen.

The Bashkirs, who roamed the valleys of the Belaya and Ufa rivers, were also under the rule of the Tatar khans. The chief occupation of the Bashkirs was herding. Hunting served as an auxiliary means of existence. They paid the Kazan khans tribute in the form of marten skins.

**The Nogai Horde.** In the beginning of the 15th century a large independent horde ruled by its own princes came into being in the region between the Volga and the Yaik (the Ural) rivers. This horde was called the Nogai (13th-14th centuries) because it contained certain tribes that had once been subject to Nogai, the khan of the Golden Horde. The Nogais continued to lead a pastoral nomad life. The horde was broken up into small domains ruled almost independently by members of the prince's family, one of the princes was recognized as the chief prince.

## 33. THE CRIMEAN KHANATE

An independent Tatar khanate was formed in the Crimea in the 15th century. The Tatars were in possession of the northern steppe of the Crimean Peninsula. The seaboard, which was divided from the steppe by mountain ranges was in the hands of the Italians After the Crusades, two powerful Italian mercantile republics—Venice and Genoa—seized the most important trade routes to the East in the 13th century. The Venetian and Genoese merchants penetrated to the Black Sea and seized the most important harbours in the Crimea, forcing out the Greeks. A struggle commenced between Venice and Genoa for possession of the Black Sea markets. Genoa was victorious, and the chief coastal towns of the Crimea came under its power. The centre of the Genoese colonies was Kaffa (now Feodosiya), where the ruins of Genoese walls and towers exist to this day. The Genoese in the Crimea were compelled to recognize the supremacy of the Golden Horde khans, but they retained their independence in the administration of their internal affairs and spread their rule over the entire southern shore of the Crimea, with its heterogeneous population (Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Jews, Tatars, and others).

Originally the Crimea Tatars engaged exclusively in herding. They wandered with their herds far beyond the confines of the peninsula. But gradually, agriculture developed side by side with cattle breeding. The Tatar feudal lords began to encroach upon the lands of the indigenous peoples of the Crimea as well as of their own tribesmen who had settled on the peninsula. The Tatar peasants who lived on the lands of the feudal lords had to pay them a tenth of the crops they grew and perform services for them under the corvée. The Christian and Jewish population had to pay quitrent.

In the 15th century the Crimean feudal lords grew so strong that they elected their own khan in the person of Hadji Girai, who was considered a descendant of Genghis Khan. After his death (1466) a struggle for power broke out among his sons. Victory fell to the clever and able Mengli Girai, but even he did not immediately establish himself firmly on the throne. One of the big Crimean feudal lords quarrelled with him and appealed to the Turks. Mengli Girai found an ally in the Genoese. In 1475 a Turkish fleet appeared off the coast of the Crimea and destroyed Kaffa and other Genoese fortresses. Mengli Girai was taken prisoner and carried off to Constantinople. The remaining Genoese intermingled with the Tatar population of the Crimea.

The sultan converted the khanate of the Crimea into a dependency of Turkey. By agreement with the Crimean feudal lords he restored Mengli Girai to the throne (1479-1515). The Crimean khans were obliged to come to the sultan's aid with their troops at his first summons. The

sultan placed his garrisons in Kaffa and other important Crimean coastal towns.

Mengli Girai formed a close alliance with the Moscow Grand Prince Ivan III, and with his help routed his enemy—the khan of the Golden Horde. In league with Muscovy, Mengli Girai waged war against Lithuania and also made frequent devastating raids upon the Ukraine; he captured and burnt Kiev, and went deep into the Lithuanian Duchy. The Polish kings, who were also the grand dukes of Lithuania, annually paid heavy tribute to Mengli Girai and his descendants, to purchase immunity from his incursions. The Muscovy princes, in their turn, sent annual gifts to the Crimea. Bakhchisarai—"the palace of gardens"—became the capital of the Crimean khanate. The city received its name from its luxurious palaces and gardens with their beautiful fountains.

In Bakhchisarai Mengli Girai built a school. Instruction in it, however, was limited to the teaching of the Mohammedan sacred books.

The Crimean khanate was the most powerful Tatar khanate in Eastern Europe. It lasted until the end of the 18th century.

## 34. THE SIBERIAN KHANATE THE KAZAKHS

**The Peoples of Western Siberia in the 15th Century.** The Tatars living east of the Urals along the Tobol River formed a separate Siberian khanate. In the 16th century the city situated at the mouth of the Tobol, which the Russians called "Siberia," became its capital. The Siberian khanate was not a united kingdom. It was broken up into a large number of small principalities (*ulusi*) whose petty princes enjoyed a large measure of independence.

The Siberian Tatars engaged in cattle raising and to some extent in agriculture, but the chief wealth of their land lay in their valuable fur-bearing animals—sable, marten, beaver, squirrel, etc. Hunting provided the Siberian Tatars with a profitable article of exchange with the more cultured lands of Asia—Bokhara and Khiva. The Siberian Tatars also obtained furs by robbing their neighbours, the trappers, from whom they collected tribute in furs.

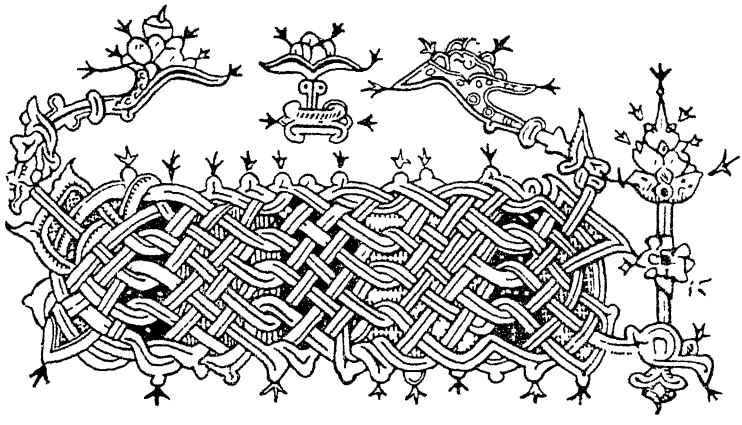
Along the upper reaches of the Tura and to the north of it lived the Mansi (Voguls); along the lower reaches of the Irtysh and along the Ob—the Khanti (Ostiaks). Both of these peoples were divided into small tribes ruled by petty princes. The Mansi lived by hunting. Each clan owned a section of forest where it set up enclosures for the catching of elk and placed arbalests. Some of the Mansi practised a rudimentary form of agriculture and cattle breeding. The Khanti lived chiefly by fishing. Those of the tribe who inhabited the tundra raised herds of northern elk.

The Mansi and the Khanti were heathens: the Khanti worshipped the bear, which they regarded as their ancestor. Whenever they killed a bear they performed a sacred song and dance over it, to "atone for their sin."

The Tatars conquered the Mansi and the Khanti and forced them to pay tribute in furs. In case of war the Vogul and Ostiak princelings had to go with their troops to help the Tatars.

To the north of the Khanti the Nentsi (Samoyedes) roamed the tundra with their herds of elk. In the spring they moved on to the Ob River for fishing. The vast tundra made the Nentsi inaccessible to the conquerors, they therefore did not fall under the rule of the Tatars.

**Formation of the Kazakh Khanate.** In the middle of the 15th century the Kazakh khanate was formed east of the Urals, on the land of present-day Kazakhstan. The nomadic peoples comprising it had formerly belonged to a union of Uzbek tribes. In 1456 they separated from the Uzbeks and formed an independent kingdom. The Kazakhs received their name from the fact that they had separated from the Uzbeks (the word *kazakh* in Turkic means "a free man who has broken away from his tribe," from which comes the Russian word *kazak*—Cossack—meaning "a free man").



# CREATION OF THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL STATE

## *Chapter XII*

## THE REIGN OF IVAN III AND VASILI III

### 35. TERRITORIAL FORMATION OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

**Consolidation of Northeastern Rūs.** Beginning with the 14th century closer economic ties developed among the different Russian principalities. This contributed to their gradual consolidation into a single national Russian realm. However, the economy of Russia was, in itself, inadequate to ensure the formation of a centralized Russian state in the 15th century. The process of unification was hastened by the need to defend the country against the Tatars and other external enemies.

During the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505), son of Vasili the Blind, the Grand Principality of Moscow annexed almost all the lands of Northeastern Rūs that had remained independent, and formed a single Russian state.

Of the territories that still retained their independence before the 15th century the largest was that of Novgorod, which had vast colonial

possessions in the Maritime North. Novgorod continued to be ruled by a *veche*, and by elected burgomasters and *tisyatski*. It concluded agreements with the grand princes as of old, but the Novgorod boyars clearly realized that their liberties were coming to an end. Among these Novgorod boyars was a group who were inclined to side with Lithuania in order to preserve their ancient privileges. This group was headed by the rich and influential Boretsky family. One member of the family was the Novgorod burgomaster. His mother, the energetic Marfa Boretskaya, led the struggle against Muscovy. The Boretsky faction often exclaimed at the *veche*. "We do not want to be called the patrimony of the Grand Prince of Moscow! We are free people, and we will not tolerate any insults from Moscow; we are for King Casimir."

In 1471 the ruling faction of Novgorod boyars betrayed their land and submitted to the rule of Casimir, the Polish king and Lithuanian Grand Duke. On the other hand, the Novgorod poor were for union with Moscow, with which Novgorod was inseparably bound. Ivan III, leading a big army, undertook a campaign against Novgorod. The Novgorod army was defeated in a decisive battle on the Shelona River. The city was suffering from a shortage of bread, and the poorest elements of the population compelled the boyars to enter into negotiations with the grand prince. Ivan III ceased military operations on condition that indemnity be paid. Novgorod promised to break its alliance with Lithuania. Moscow permitted Novgorod to retain its former "liberties." However, Ivan III annexed Novgorod's colonies to Muscovy. In 1472 a Muscovy army invaded the land of Perm. This country was inhabited by the Komi-Permiak people. The Muscovy princes defeated the Perm princes and captured their chief towns. The land of Perm was forced to recognize the supremacy of the Moscow Grand Prince. Being in need of metal, Ivan III sent men skilled in mining to the newly conquered Ural regions.

Disturbances still continued in Novgorod. The defeated boyars began to settle accounts with the friends of Muscovy and the latter sought protection from the grand prince. In 1477 the people of Novgorod welcomed Ivan III as their *Gosudar*. They had never before bestowed this title on any grand prince, and in this case were prompted by a desire to emphasize that Great Novgorod remained independent of Muscovy, since in the dialect of Novgorod the term *Gosudar*, meaning lord, was applied to any feudal landowner. Ivan III took advantage of this occasion to demand the same "sovereignty" in Novgorod as he enjoyed in Moscow, that is, unlimited power, since *Gosudar* in the Moscow dialect meant sovereign, supreme ruler The Novgorod *veche* refused to accede to Ivan III's demands. He marched against Novgorod a second time and besieged it. This time the Novgorodians made no attempt at resistance, and opened negotiations with him. In January 1478, after a lengthy parley, they accepted all the conditions laid down



Ivan III. *From a contemporary French engraving*

by the grand prince. The *veche* was abolished; Novgorod was to be governed by the grand prince's lord lieutenants, instead of the burgomaster; the greater part of the lands that had belonged to the Novgorod feudal lords passed to the grand prince. The republic of Novgorod ceased to exist. The symbol of Novgorod's liberties—the *veche* bell—was removed. Many of Novgorod's leading boyar and merchant families (including Marfa Boretskaya) were removed to the cities of Muscovy and replaced by nobles from Moscow. The military servitors of Muscovy were settled by the grand prince on the lands that had been appropriated from the Novgorod boyars. Pskov was allowed to retain some of its former independence for having helped Muscovy in the war against Novgorod.

The next principality to be annexed was Tver, which had once been a rival of Moscow. The Prince of Tver, Mikhail Borisovich, like the Novgorod prince, had betrayed Russia and trafficked with Casimir, the Polish king and the Grand Duke of Lithuania Ivan III profited by this to besiege Tver. During the night Mikhail fled to Lithuania. The Tver boyars transferred their allegiance to the conqueror (1485).

The principality of Ryazan also became a tributary of Muscovy. Thus, during the reign of Ivan III a single national Russian state was formed in place of the former independencies of Northeastern Rūs.

The Russian national state united the Russian people. The kindred peoples of Byelorussia and Ukraine were unable to free themselves from the power of Lithuania and Poland and form their own national states. They subsequently united with the Russian people in a single centralized multi-national state.

## 36. LIBERATION FROM THE TATAR YOKE. THE CONQUESTS OF IVAN III

**Overthrow of the Tatar Yoke** (1480). With the incorporation of Great Novgorod, Muscovy became powerful enough to venture on casting off the Tatar yoke. Ivan III made the most of the Golden Horde's disintegration. He contracted a close alliance with the

Crimean khan, Mengli Girai, to whom he annually sent envoys with personal gifts for the khan, his wives and his leading feudal lords. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Golden Horde, Ivan III stopped paying tribute to the Tatars.

Ahmed, khan of the Golden Horde, leagued himself with the Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1480 and went forth to compel Moscow to pay tribute. The grand prince led his troops to the Oka, to meet the Tatars. Ahmed, who was expecting help from the Lithuanian Grand Duke, moved upstream, in the direction of the Lithuanian border. At this time Ivan III was confronted with the menace of a mutiny on the part of his brothers. The grand prince hastened back to Moscow, subdued his brothers and returned to his troops.



Skirmish at the Ugra.
*Chronicles of Nikon*

The Tatar and the Russian hosts stood facing each other on opposite sides of the Ugra River, a tributary of the Oka. Neither the Russians nor the Tatars crossed the river. Ahmed was willing to make peace but he insisted upon the payment of tribute. The bishop of Rostov, Vassian, sent a message to Ivan III exhorting him to courageously stand his ground against the Tatars and not to heed the cowards who advised him to betray his native land to the enemy. Thus things dragged on until the onset of frosts. When the Ugra froze, Ivan ordered his troops to withdraw in order to give battle from more favourable positions. The khan, however, hesitated to attack. His troops were suffering from the cold and lack of food. Meanwhile, Ivan III's ally, the Crimean Khan Mengli Girai, was menacing the Golden Horde from the rear, and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who had promised his aid, had left Ahmed in the lurch. The latter retired from Moscow's borders. Thus ended this remarkable seven months' hostile meeting on the Ugra River.

And thus ended the Tatar-Mongolian yoke, which for two centuries had lain heavily upon the Russian people. Having won its independence from Tatar domination, the Russian national state was now able further to develop and strengthen itself politically and economically.

The so recently omnipotent Golden Horde was utterly routed by

the Crimean Tatars in 1502. In place of the Golden Horde a small khanate came into existence on the lower reaches of the Volga, the capital of which was the city of Astrakhan.

**Russia's Foreign Policy** (1492-1505). Freedom from the Tatar yoke enabled Ivan III to undertake the gradual recovery of Russian territories on its western frontier. From the Murmansk coast to the lower reaches of the Danube and the Black Sea lay the ancient Russian lands of Kiev Rūs, which had been seized by the Danes, Swedes, Germans, Lithuanians and Turks. As a preliminary to his struggle for the acquisition of Smolensk and the Baltic, Ivan III in 1492 concluded peace with Turkey, being the first European sovereign to do so.

That same year Ivan III had a fortress built on the delta of the Narova River, and named it after himself—Ivan-gorod (the city of Ivan). This marked the beginning of Russia's righteous war for possession of the Baltic Sea. The Russian army, in retaliating the Swedish incursions which reached almost to the city of Vologda, advanced to the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia. A diplomatic war commenced over Pechenga (Petsamo) which the Danes were endeavouring to seize. In 1500 open war that lasted three years broke out with Lithuania for the possession of ancient Russian lands. The Muscovy troops won several brilliant victories over the Lithuanians Lithuania entered into an alliance with the Livonian order. The German knights approached Pskov several times but suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Russian troops. By a peace treaty with Lithuania, the ancient Russian province, the land of Seversk, including the city of Chernigov, were annexed to the dominions of Muscovy, bringing Russia close up to Kiev. The Livonian Order undertook to pay annual tribute to the Moscow Grand Prince, but did not fulfil its obligations.

Ivan III forced the Kazan khanate to accept vassal dependence on Muscovy. He interfered in the appointment of khans to the Kazan throne, and the people of Kazan could do nothing without the permission of Muscovy.

Several campaigns were launched in the Urals. In 1500 the troops of Muscovy crossed the Ural Mountain Range. In the mountains they were attacked by the Nentsi, whom they defeated and from whom they took away 200 reindeer. After that the Moscow waywodes continued on their way by reindeer while the common soldiers travelled on dog teams. The Yugra princes who came forth against them were routed and compelled to pay tribute.

Ivan III pursued a cautious but tenacious policy of consolidating the Russian state. Occasional failures did not daunt or check him. He achieved his ends by clever and surefooted tactics. His relations with the Tatar khans were governed by subtle policy, he skillfully played off the Crimean and Siberian Tatars against the Golden Horde, and tried to avoid recourse to arms. Harsh in his attitude towards his vas-

sals, he held the power firmly in his hands and succeeded in making himself feared.

## 37. RUSSIAN SOCIAL AND STATE STRUCTURE AT THE END OF THE 15TH CENTURY

**Development of Money-Commodity Relations.** The unification of the Russian nation into a single body-politic was possible given the existence of at least a rudimentary form of market intercourse between the various Russian territories.

The economy of the Russian state at the end of the 15th century was fundamentally still a natural one. But the development of money-commodity relations in this period proceeded more intensively than formerly. More active trade relations were established between the different towns and regions. A large trading centre was created in Moscow; shops and bazaars arose, the latter being originally known as *gostinye dvori*, literally meaning "guest inns" for the accommodation of visiting merchants. Food products were brought for sale to Moscow from the surrounding regions. A foreigner who visited Moscow during Ivan III's reign gives a vivid description of winter trade. on the ice of the Moscow River "the merchants set up their stalls with various wares"; here "every day throughout the winter corn, meat, pigs, firewood, hay, and other necessary supplies are brought for sale, at the end of November all the people in the vicinity of Moscow slaughter their cows and pigs and bring them to the city for sale. It is a pleasure to look at these enormous quantities of stripped animal carcasses standing on the ice on their hind legs."

Thus, the individual household no longer produced all its own foodstuffs, and purchased some of them on the market. The growth of money-commodity relations is evidenced by the fact that landowners at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries were no longer content with receiving payment in kind from their peasants, and also demanded money from them (monetary quitrent).

The development of trade enhanced the importance of the merchants in the cities. At the end of the 14th century mention is made in Moscow of a group of rich Surozh merchants (*i.e.*, those trading with the town of Surozh, or Sudak, in the Crimea) and clothiers. In addition to trade the rich merchants engaged in money-lending; many of the appanage princes and even the brothers of Ivan III were in debt to them. The merchants were interested in the cessation of feudal strife and the unification of all Russian lands, inasmuch as this would foster trade between the various parts of the country.

**The Army and Fee Estates. The Landlords and the Peasants.** The economy of the feudal patrimonies remained a natural one, and still found difficulty in adapting itself to the market. There was little money in the country. When in need of money, the landowners

borrowed it from the rich merchants, but chiefly from the monasteries, which amassed considerable wealth through the collection of donations and by usury. Lands were mortgaged as security; in default of redemption the mortgage was foreclosed and the lands remained the property of the monastery. Large patrimonies were ruined and broken up The chief military force was no longer the large landowners who, under the new conditions, could not afford to maintain large military retinues, but the petty landowners. Most of these petty landowners were the vassals of the more powerful feudal lords and possessed lands which they had received from their lords in payment for their services. They were chiefly military servitors or the *dvoryane* (nobility) who belonged to the court of the grand prince. The term *dvoryane* was applied to all small landowners who served in the army of the grand prince.

The army became centralized. Until then every prince had had to appear with his own troops when a summons came from the grand prince calling him to the army. Such a conglomerate army was deficient in many ways. In case of a sudden attack by the enemy it was difficult to marshal. On each occasion it was necessary to come to terms with every individual prince. There was no single command in the army. Every regiment fought under its own "banner." As the separate principalities were destroyed, Ivan III attached the regiments or, as it was then said, the "*dvori*" (courts) of the princes to his own court. In this way a large army of the *dvoryane* (courtiers or nobles) was formed, augmented by freemen and servants of the boyars.

However, the more important boyars who had been former princes still retained their own small forces, and during campaigns they joined the army of the *dvoryane*.

Owing to the lack of money in the treasury of the grand princes, the *dvoryane* did not receive their allowances. Instead of paying in money, the grand prince gave the *dvoryanin* a small section of land which he could hold so long as he rendered military service. If a noble resigned his military service, he forfeited the land. The lands given to the nobles or other military servitors were called *pomestya* or fee estates in contradistinction to the patrimonies, which were the absolute property of their owners, and the person rendering this military service who held the estate in fief was called *pomeshchik* (landlord).

Thus, the *dvoryane* formed a large stratum of petty landed proprietors (later all landowners came to be called *pomeshchiki*). The *pomeshchik* had the right to collect quitrent from the peasants living on his estate and to force them to render compulsory services under the corvée.

Under feudalism the peasant was never free. The feudal lord kept him on his land under compulsion, and thought nothing of resorting to open violence. It was especially difficult for the "old inhabitants," peasants who had lived on the patrimony for a long time, to quit the

land of their feudal lord. But even the other peasants were restricted in their freedom of passing from one landlord to another: custom demanded that they quit only after the winding up of all the field work, in the beginning of winter, when the grain had been stored in their master's granaries.

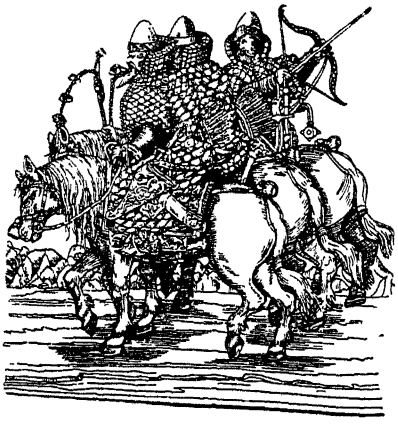
After the formation of a strong, centralized state, which protected the interests of the feudal lords, the nobility wanted to legalize this arrangement and thus further strengthen their power over the peasants.

To provide serf labour for the landlords, Ivan III passed a law in 1497 by which the peasant was not permitted to leave his landlord until all the farm work had been completed. A definite day was established throughout the realm on which the peasant could "leave," namely, St. George's Day ("*Yuryev Den*"), that is, November 26 (old style calendar). The peasant could quit his master during the week preceding St. George's Day and the week following it. But before doing so he had to settle all accounts with his master and pay for his *pozhiloye*, that is, his tenancy. Even before 1497 the peasants had been greatly restricted in their right of transition from one landowner to another; the new law increased these restrictions. Muscovy was a feudal state, and it helped the landlords in every way possible to enthrall the peasants.

The numerous nobility acquired great political influence in the state. Having no landed property of their own, the nobles wholly depended on the grand prince, from whom they received their estates and who gave them every opportunity to exploit the peasantry. The grand prince therefore had a loyal servant in the nobility, upon whose support he could rely in the matter of strengthening his power.

**Central and Local Government.** When the separate feudal principalities were united in a single feudal state, the government of Muscovy was organized on a new basis. Under Ivan III the entire administration became concentrated in the hands of the grand prince.

All the princes who had at one time been independent rulers were now in the service of the Grand Prince of Muscovy and became his boyars. The most illustrious of the boyars were members of the grand prince's council, called the *duma*. The former princes and the rest of the boyars ranked according to lineage or, as it was then said, "according to birth." The most exalted boyars received high posts. A boyar of quality could not serve under a man of inferior dignity or even occupy a similar position as an inferior. When appointments were made for campaigns or other service, disputes would arise over "place," with disastrous results. This state of affairs historians have given the name *mestnichestvo*—contention for precedence (from the Russian word *mesto* meaning "place"). This rivalry for precedence wrought considerable mischief. Appointments were made not on personal merit and ability, but in consideration of a man's rank and dignity, even though



Russian warriors of the 16th century. *According to Herberstein*

he were incompetent. Struggle for precedence was a sign of the political power wielded by the rich feudal lords at the court of the grand prince. It greatly hampered the proper conduct of state affairs, although the fact that the Grand Prince of Muscovy decided all disputes for precedence among the boyars was evidence of his own growing power.

The grand prince appointed his lord lieutenants to the newly conquered regions. These people governed the regions entrusted to them, held court, and collected taxes. For doing this they were "fed" at the expense of the population, according to ancient custom. Prior to Ivan III these requisitions in favour of the lieutenant governors were entirely unrestricted. Ivan III established a fixed ration, in kind or in money, and also determined the amount of legal dues and trading imposts. Special government offices, called *prikazi*, were set up in Moscow. They were of two types. Some were in charge of territorial administration and the former appanages; others supervised different branches of the state administration, such as military affairs and finances. Of great importance in the administration were the grand prince's clerks or scribes on whom all the routine of these institutions devolved. In 1497 Ivan III issued a "Law Book" called *Sudebnik*, establishing the form of government and legal procedure in the state.

**Muscovy's International Position.** A strong army was organized under Ivan III. The concentration of power and finances, as well as the centralization of the army made it possible considerably to improve military technique. An artillery was created; craftsmen called in from Western Europe cast cannon in the newly built *Liteiny Dvor* (Foundry) on the Neglinnaya River in Moscow.

During the reign of Ivan III the Russian state acquired a place of importance among the countries of Europe. The German emperor offered Ivan III the title of king, but Ivan declared that he needed nobody's confirmation. The Pope, who had long wanted to bring Eastern Europe under his influence, also entered into relations with Muscovy. Trade between Muscovy and the mercantile countries of Western Europe, especially with the rich republic of Venice, became very brisk. Vene-

tian envoys and merchants paid frequent visits to Moscow via the Black Sea and the Crimea. The grand prince needed European artificers. Through the medium of Venice he invited architects, gun craftsmen and other specialists to settle in Moscow.



The "cap of Monomachus." Arabian work of the 13th century

In 1453 Constantinople was conquered by the Turkish sultan, and the Byzantine empire fell. Turkish domination extended over the Black Sea coast, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and up the Danube as far as Vienna. Through the aid of Venice and the Pope, Ivan III formed a matrimonial alliance with Sophia Palaeologus, the niece of the last Greek emperor. Both Venice and the Pope hoped through this marriage to increase their influence in Moscow and induce Russia to fight against Turkey. They also counted on penetrating into the East—to India and China—through Russia. But Ivan III did not allow foreign interference in the affairs of the Russian state.

Through the medium of the Crimea Ivan III entered into relations with Turkey, and Moscow merchants started travelling to that country. Relations between Russia and Persia were also established. Afanasy Nikitin, a merchant of Tver, after many adventures succeeded in making his way into India (1467-1472). He left an interesting description of his travels, "peregrinations over three seas" (the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea). Afanasy Nikitin was one of the first Europeans to reach India.

**The Power of the Grand Prince.** The position of the Grand Principality of Moscow underwent a radical change in the reign of Ivan III. Formerly it had been one of the many principalities of Northeastern Rūs. Now it was transformed into a strong consolidated state uniting almost the entire Russian people and had become a national Russian realm. The character of the grand prince's authority also changed. Ivan III's reign saw the beginnings of autocracy, that is, the unlimited power of the grand prince. Formerly the Grand Prince of Moscow was simply *primus inter pares* (first among his peers), the most powerful of the many Russian princes. Now he had become the sole "sovereign" of all Northeastern Rūs. Sometimes he even called himself the "tsar" (a contraction from the word Caesar). After the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, Ivan III began to regard himself as the direct successor of the Greek emperors. He adopted the imperial seal of Byzantine—the double-headed eagle. On state occasions Ivan



Vasili III.
*From a French engraving*

III sat on a throne set in precious stones, and wore a crown or, as the Russians called it, the "Monomakh cap" (according to legend, it had been handed down by Vladimir Monomachus, who is said to have received it from the Greek Emperor Constantine Monomachus).

The grand prince rebuilt his capital with great splendour. Before Ivan III Moscow had consisted almost exclusively of wooden buildings. Even the grand prince's palace had been made of wood. During Ivan III's reign the construction of stone buildings increased.

Ivan III invited foreign masters and artificers to Moscow. Among them was the famous Italian architect Ridolfo di Fioravante, nicknamed Aristotle, who acquainted the Russians with the use of improved building methods and mechanical devices. The masters invited from abroad built the still-existent Kremlin walls and their towers, the stone cathedrals, the luxurious stone palace of which the "Red Wing" with figures of lions still survives, and the magnificent *Granovitaya Palata*. Besides the Italian, Pskov artificers were also employed in decorating the capital.

The consolidation of the various disunited principalities into a single state led to the cessation of feudal wars among the rival princes. But the formerly independent princes did not immediately resign themselves to the loss of their rights as rulers. They were not satisfied with their position as boyars at the court of the grand prince. They wanted an active part in the government and demanded that the grand prince listen to their counsels. So long as Ivan III was surrounded by a small group of faithful old Moscow boyars, he willingly listened to their opinion and tolerated criticism. But now at the grand prince's court there were many new boyars, former appanage princes. Ivan III did not trust his enemies of yesterday, and the new boyars were constrained, sorely against their grain, to submit to the grand prince. The latter began to hold aloof from his boyars. He adopted towards them the haughty and proud mien of the Greek emperors. For disobedience to his orders boyars were either executed or exiled. The boyars attributed these changes to the influence of the Grand Princess Sophia. "As soon

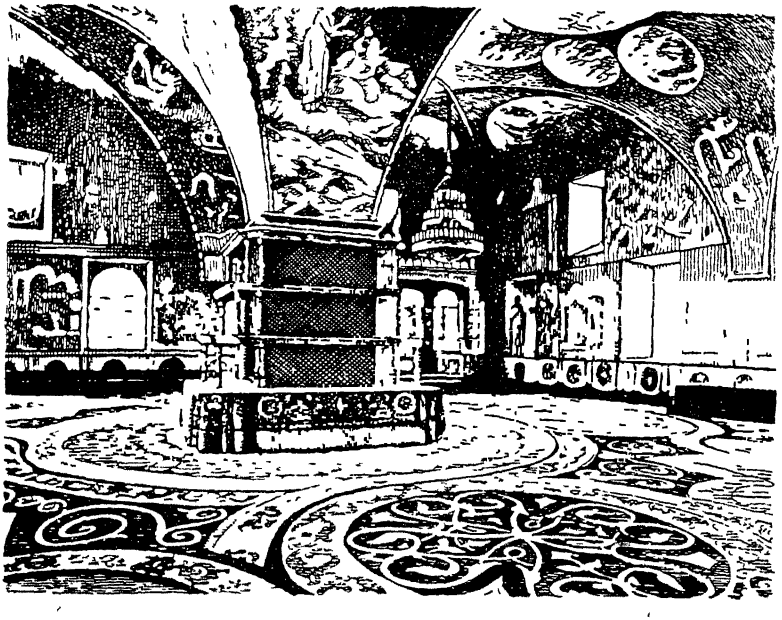
as the Grand Princess Sophia came with her Greeks," they said, "everything has become topsy-turvy."

The church played an important part in strengthening the power of the grand prince. The clergy supported the unification of the Russian lands into a single state. It preached that the grand prince derived his power from God. Ivan III, for his part, granted the church numerous privileges, ensured the inviolability of its estates and ruthlessly persecuted the "heretics," that is, men who dared to criticize the tenets of the Orthodox church. The church therefore readily gave its services to the grand prince.

**Consolidation of the Russian Realm under Vasili III.** The unification of the principalities of Northeastern Rūs was completed by Vasili III (1505-1533), the son of Ivan III. Pskov was incorporated under his rule in 1510. Vasili summoned the Pskov burgomasters and the boyars, who were Muscovy's enemies, to Novgorod on the pretext of examining their complaints against the lord lieutenant, and had them arrested A clerk of the grand prince was sent to Pskov, where, addressing the populace from the *veche* tribune he announced



Uspensky Cathedral, Moscow (1475-1479)



Granovitaya Palata, Moscow (1491)

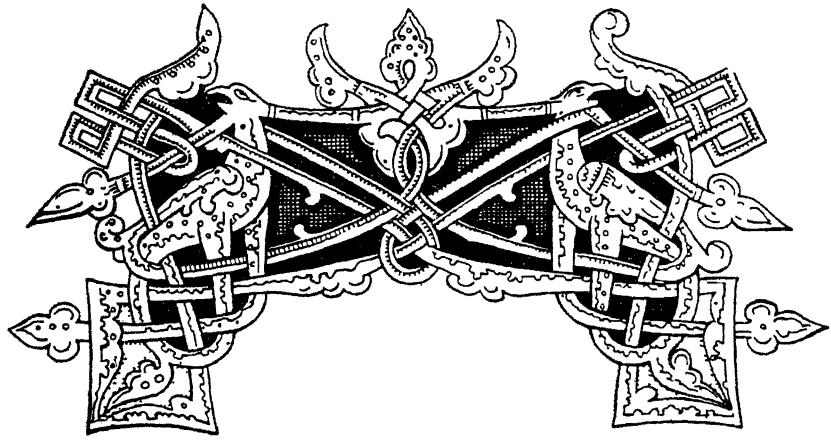
to them the demands of the grand prince, namely, that the *veche* in Pskov be abolished and that the city and its environs be governed by his lord lieutenants. The *veche* bell was removed and taken to Moscow. Three hundred Pskov families were sent to live in Moscow, and Moscow landlords were settled on their estates.

It was also during Vasili's reign that Ryazan was finally joined to the state. The last Ryazan prince, chafing under his dependence on Moscow, leagued himself with the Crimean khan. The Ryazan prince was summoned to Moscow and his person seized, but he managed to escape and fled to Lithuania. His principality was annexed to Muscovy (1521). The whole of Northeastern Rūs was now united under the hegemony of Muscovy.

Vasili III continued the struggle for the recovery of ancient Russian territories seized by the Lithuanian grand dukes as far back as the 14th century. In 1514 he laid siege to Smolensk and began bombarding the city. After three salvos a deputation headed by the bishop of Smolensk came to the grand prince at the Russian camp with the entreaty: "Do not destroy the city, take it in peace." Thus was the ancient Russian city of Smolensk re-incorporated into the Russian state.

The power of Vasili III within the Russian realm was greatly strengthened. He was now "the sovereign of sovereigns over the entire Russian land." The former appanage princes had to serve him "at his entire will." The power of Vasili III, as foreigners wrote, "surpasses all monarchs of all world", he "is absolute master of the lives and property of all." The Muscovites "openly declare that the will of their sovereign is the will of God." Vasili III removed the boyars from the government. He suffered no opposition on their part, and if a boyar contradicted him, he drove him out of the duma with curses. He decided all matters with two or three of his trusted servants, chosen for the most part among his clerks who were always at his beck and call.

One of Vasili III's contemporaries, the monk Philothei, in a message to the grand prince, expounded the ideology of the nascent autocracy. "Moscow," he wrote, "is the successor of the great world capitals: ancient Rome and the second Rome—Constantinople; Moscow is the third Rome, and there will be no fourth."



# EXPANSION OF THE RUSSIAN STATE AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A MULTI-NATIONAL REALM

## *Chapter XIII*

## THE REIGN OF IVAN IV

### 38. THE RULE OF THE BOYARS. REFORMS OF THE 1550's

**The Rule of the Boyars.** Vasili III died in 1533, leaving the throne to his three-year-old son Ivan, during whose minority the country was governed by his mother, the Princess Elena Vasilievna Glinskaya (1533-1538). Vasili's brothers, appanage princes, tried to take advantage of his death to regain a share of their lost independence. But Princess Elena, who was an energetic and determined woman, immediately crushed all such attempts. After suppressing the turbulent appanage princes, Elena reigned supreme. She is said to have been poisoned by the boyars, who hated her.

The sudden death of the princess untied the hands of the boyars. A boy of eight sat on the throne. The boyars hastened to seize the power in their own hands, but they themselves were at variance with each other. The princes Shuiski and Belski became involved in a bitter struggle. The Shuiskis rallied their followers, broke into the Kremlin, forced

their way into the palace, and seized their opponents. But the Shuiski faction did not remain in power very long. Andrei Shuiski was killed in 1543, and the power passed to the Glinskis. The rule of the boyars lasted for about nine years. The boyars were opposed to the newly established system of centralized government. They turned the cities and volosts over to their relatives and supporters for "feeding"; the lieutenants appointed by them robbed the population. Taking advantage of this turmoil and anarchic state of affairs, the Crimean and Kazan Tatars made devastating raids upon Russian lands.

In such an environment of boyar enmity and rivalry did the Grand Prince Ivan grow up, utterly neglected and scorned by those around him. He was a witness of revolting scenes of brawls and violence among the factious boyars. At the same time, young Ivan was precociously aware of the significance of his title of grand prince. As a child, during his mother's lifetime, he remembered himself on ceremonial occasions, as when attending church or at receptions of ambassadors, surrounded with imperial pomp and homage. After his mother's death those very boyars who, as he himself put it, were usually not even concerned about his food and clothing, paid him obsequious honours at state receptions. Ivan learned to read at a very early age, and he read avidly. From the scriptural books and historical works that he read, he formed an idea of a sovereign vested with supreme authority. In this respect he was greatly influenced by the metropolitan Makari, an educated person for those times who propounded the same idea in his writings. The brutal and degrading environment of his youth engendered in Ivan a strain of cruelty.



The Moscow uprising of 1547
*Chronicles of Nikon*

In 1547 the seventeen-year-old Ivan solemnly assumed the title of tsar. By this act he stressed the importance of the Russian state among the other

European states and the unlimited power wielded by the Russian tsar within his own country.

The return to the old system of appanages had a grievous effect upon the condition of the people, which resulted in a mutiny breaking out in Moscow in 1547 against the Glinski faction. The immediate cause was a great fire which destroyed a considerable part of the city. The populace had already been reduced to a state of despair by the tyrannies of the Glinskis. The Muscovites accused their oppressors of having started the fire; they shouted that Anna Glinskaya, the grandmother of the tsar, had set fire to Moscow by witchcraft. One of the Glinskis was killed; the others fled. The tsar himself took refuge in his village of Vorobyovo (the site of the present Lenin Hills).

**The Demands of the Nobility.** When the uprising was suppressed, a man of humble origin, a clever and adroit official named Alexei Adashev, came to the head of administrative affairs. With the support of an influential court priest named Sylvester, Adashev formed a strong ruling group in which were included several powerful boyars. Thus was created an *Izbrannaya rada* (Council of the Elect) or, as it was otherwise called, "the intimate duma," without which the young tsar made no decisions.

It was necessary as quickly as possible to satisfy the demands of the mass of the so-called military servitors—the petty provincial landlord nobility. The demands of these people found expression at the time in the writings of a nobleman by the name of Ivan Peresvetov. In the latter's opinion, the tsar's chief concern should be for the "military," that is, the nobility, whom he should provide with lands and salaries. Inasmuch as there was a dearth of land, he should begin the conquest of the "*podraiskaya zemlitsa*" — the near-paradise — in other words, the Kazan khanate. To provide salaries for the nobility Peresvetov proposed that all the national revenue be concentrated in the royal exchequer. For this purpose the system of "feedings" was to be abolished. Legal procedure was to be improved by the compilation of a code of laws and the infliction of severe punishment for bribery and corruption. The realization of all these measures required a strong rule and the elimination of the remaining vestiges of feudal dismemberment. And inasmuch as the "*leniviye bogatiny*" (the idle rich)—the boyars—would be opposed to this, Peresvetov counselled breaking their opposition by "terror," since, he claimed, "without such terror it is impossible to introduce truth in the kingdom." Such was the program of the nobility. One section of the boyars realized the necessity of making concessions. They rallied around Adashev and helped him pass a number of measures aimed at strengthening the tsar's power and at the same time satisfying the most pressing needs of the nobility.

**Reforms of the 1550's.** The first thing to be undertaken was the reorganization of the administration. This was necessitated not so much by the demands of the nobility, as by the rapid growth of dissatisfaction in the country with the old forms of government, which had found vent in the Moscow uprising of 1547. The ruling classes were faced with the menace of a popular outbreak. A convocation of the clergy, boyars and nobles is said to have been held in Moscow in 1549 to discuss ways and means of pacifying the country. In 1550 a new code of laws was published, regulating legal procedure and defining punishment for bribery.

When Ivan IV was still a child, all cases of banditry had been withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the lord lieutenants who had turned them into a source of private income, and had been turned over to the district reeves. These reeves were elected by the population of the *uyezds* (counties) from among the local nobility. These elections were virtually manipulated by the nobility, and gave them great power over the peasants of their district.

In 1555, under great pressure from the provinces, the system of "feedings" was completely abolished. The lord lieutenants were replaced by mayors and magistrates elected from the people. These mayors and magistrates administered justice and collected taxes from the townspeople and the *chorniye* (commonalty), that is, the state peasants. The revenue went directly into the exchequer. This measure was a very important step in the centralization of government.

Simultaneously measures were taken to improve the position and military training of the nobility.

In 1555 a code was published concerning military service; it defined the normal size of an estate whose landlord was obliged to appear "on horse and fully equipped" (about 150 hectares—370 acres). If a military servitor possessed a larger estate, he was to provide a certain number of serfs, varying according to the size of his estate or patrimony.

To ensure labour power for the nobility, the code of 1550 confirmed the law prohibiting peasants from leaving their landowners on any date other than St. George's Day. Peasants living on the lands of the feudal lords were, as formerly, under the jurisdiction of the landowners' court. All these measures were in the interests of the nobility, *i.e.*, the petty and medium feudal lords. The strengthening of the nobility was conducive to the strengthening of the regal power.

## 39. THE WARS OF TSAR IVAN IV

**The Conquest of the Volga Khanates.** At the beginning of Ivan IV's reign, the whole of Northeastern Rūs was already united. It was during his rule that the subjugation of the neighbouring



Kazan in the 17th century. *According to Oelschlager (Olearius)*

peoples, the conquest of their lands, and the gradual transformation of the Russian state into a multi-national state was begun. In the reign of Vasili III the Kazan Tatars, supported by the Crimean khan, had freed themselves from dependence on Muscovy. Ivan IV began preparations for the complete conquest of the Kazan khanate. Besides the need of providing land and serfs for the nobility, other motives for this undertaking were incessant raids on Russian frontier territories by the Kazan Tatars who desolated the land and carried off large numbers of captives. Furthermore, Kazan was the key to the Volga waterway which had an outlet to the Caspian, and to the routes beyond the Urals. The strengthening of Turkey on the Black Sea and in the Caucasus constituted a threat to Russia from the east via Astrakhan and Kazan. In 1550 a big expedition against Kazan had ended in failure. In the spring of 1551 the city of Sviyazhsk was built on the land of the Mari, * on the hilly side of the Volga, opposite the city of Kazan. The Mari hillmen, who had till then been paying tribute to the Kazan khans, were now compelled to submit to the Moscow tsar. The following year the troops of Muscovy, using Sviyazhsk as their base, crossed the Volga and invested Kazan. The Tatars put up a furious

* A Ural-Altaic tribe on the Middle Volga (between Nizhni Novgorod and Kazan).

resistance but were obviously outmatched by superior Russian forces which numbered 150,000 strong, well equipped with artillery. With the co-operation of foreign engineers Kazan was encircled by a line of trenches; siege turrets were moved up to her walls which were undermined. The total number of Tatar troops in the city was only 30,000. Supported by detachments which attacked the Muscovy troops from the rear Kazan held out for a month and a half. Finally, the walls of the city were blown up, and on October 2, 1552, Kazan was taken by assault. The struggle, however, did not cease with the fall of Kazan. The Tatar, Mari, Udmurt, Chuvash and Mordva peoples continued to offer resistance to the conquerors. The rebels inflicted a telling defeat upon the Muscovy troops and even captured the waywode who had been sent out against them. Only after a struggle that lasted five years were the local feudal lords won over by bribes to the Russian tsar. The lands of the former Kazan khanate were distributed among the Muscovy military and the clergy The population was reduced to serfdom. The Tatar feudal lords, who had retained part of their lands and were placed on the same footing as the Muscovy nobility, also took a hand in the exploitation of the peasant population of the Volga. Thus the toiling people of the Volga region came under a double yoke—that of the Russian and the Tatar feudal lords. With the conquest of Kazan the Bashkirs too recognized the supremacy of Russia.



A Russian man-at-arms. *Oruzheinaya Palata*

In 1555 Yediger, sovereign of the Siberian khanate, acknowledged himself the vassal of Muscovy and undertook to pay the Moscow tsar annual tribute.

In 1556 came the turn of Astrakhan: the Muscovy military servitors drove out the local khan and occupied the city. The entire Volga River was now in the hands of Muscovy.

The acquisition of Astrakhan opened the way to the Caspian countries. Taking advantage of intestine feuds among the petty princes of the Northern Caucasus, Ivan IV ordered a city to be built on the Terek, but abandoned it under pressure from Turkey. The Russian Cossacks, *i.e.*, the free military servitors, refused, however, to accept this decision and continued to live on the Terek.

After the subjugation of Kazan and Astrakhan, the Eastern front was well fortified against Turkish aggression. But the Crimean khanate was still a great menace. Year after year the Crimean Tatars made devastating inroads upon the Russian frontier regions and carried off thousands of prisoners, whom they then sold to Turkey. To render the southern borders safe against these raids, a fortified line was built, the so-called Tula abatis line, which consisted of a number of abatises, forts and other artificial barrages near the city of Tula.

In order to keep a watch on the movements of the Tatars, detachments, or, as they were called, *stanitsi*, were sent to the steppe, where they set up military outposts. Usually the observer kept a lookout for the enemy from a high tree or a tower, beneath which his comrades stood ready with saddled horses. As soon as a column of dust appeared in the distance, signalling the approach of Tatar horsemen, the observers galloped with the news to the next outpost, which relayed the information further. In this way the news of approaching Tatars reached Moscow quickly and made it possible to move troops promptly against the Tatars.

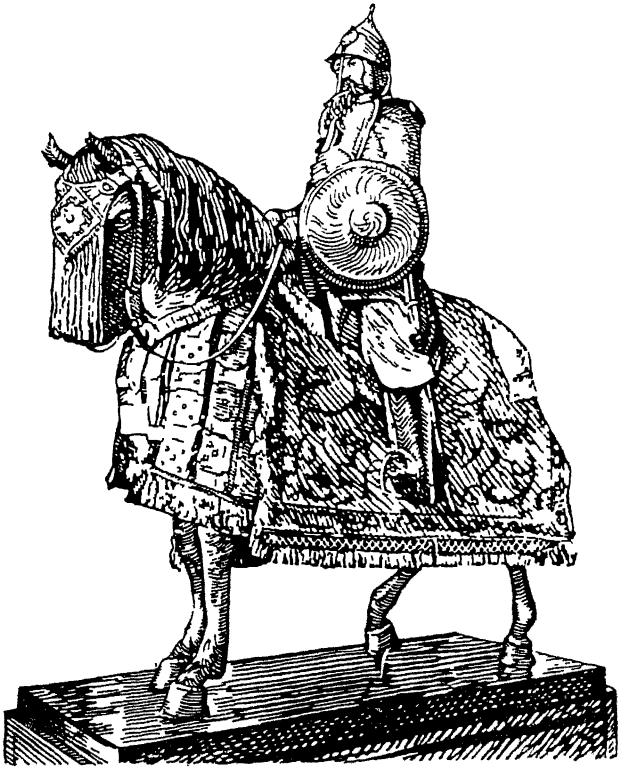
At the end of the 1550's the Moscow government decided to attack the Crimea. The Russian troops sailed down the Don and the Dnieper, and reached the Crimean coast. The war for the Baltic, begun in 1558, prevented the Russians from following up these successes.

**Beginning of the War for Livonia.** The vital needs of the nation forced Muscovy to seek an outlet to the Baltic Sea. Russia's possession of a seaboard was essential in the interests of defence, and as a means of developing her trade, and establishing cultural relations with Western Europe. Isolated from the West by Livonia and Lithuania, Muscovy, in its intercourse with Western Europe, was virtually dependent upon these two states, who were interested in preserving the backwardness of the Russian state and persistently prevented Western European master-workmen and skilled artificers from coming to enter the service of the Russian tsar.

After the defeat of Grunewald the decline of the German knighthood went on apace and they were unable to maintain the independence of their domains. Supremacy in Livonia meant supremacy in the Baltic. And so the clash among Livonia's neighbours—Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark and Russia—for the possession of Livonia was coming to a head.

In January 1558 Ivan IV launched military operations against Livonia. After several months of fighting, Narva, one of Livonia's most important ports, was taken. Next Yuriev (renamed Dorpat by the Germans), an ancient Russian city, was recovered for Russia. One town

after another surrendered to Muscovy's waywodes. Livonia fell beneath the blows of Muscovy's troops (1561). Alarmed by the success of Russian arms, the neighbouring states intervened in Livonia's affairs. Revel (Tallinn) placed itself under the protection of Sweden, Denmark took over the Island of Oesel, while the rest of Livonia went to Sigismund-Augustus, the Polish king and Grand Duke of Lithuania. The Grand Master of the Livonian Order kept Courland, but merely as a vassal of the Polish king. Thus the German Order, which had once threatened Russia had now ended its existence. The partition of Livonia led to a new twenty years' war of Russia against Poland, Sweden and Denmark.



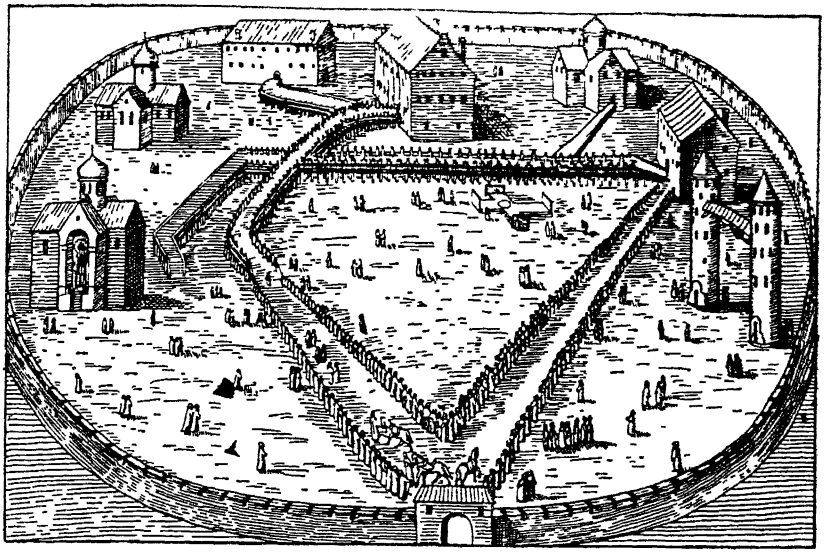
A Russian mounted warrior. *Oruzheinaya Palata*

## 40. THE OPRICHNINA

**Organization of the Oprichnina.** In Tsar Ivan's opinion the *Izbrannaya rada* (Council of the Elect) was not prosecuting the war with Livonia with sufficient vigour. Tsar Ivan fell out with the Council soon after the capture of Kazan. The boyars on the Council endeavoured to limit the tsar's power. Adashev and the priest Sylvester consulted their boyar followers behind the tsar's back. This attempt to limit the tsar's power in the interest of a small group of boyars was strongly resisted by the mass of the military servitors.

In the beginning of 1560 Adashev was banished from Moscow to honourable exile as waywode of one of the conquered Livonian cities, where he died shortly afterwards. At the same time Sylvester was secluded in a monastery. This was followed by the execution of their supporters. Many of the latter fled to Lithuania, to the enemies of the Russian state. Nevertheless in 1563 Muscovy's troops won a very great victory. Polotsk, one of the largest cities on the Western Dvina and once the centre of a Russian principality, surrendered. King Sigismund-Augustus made peace overtures to the Moscow government and agreed to renounce all the cities and lands in Livonia conquered by the Russian troops, but Moscow was not inclined to make peace. In 1564 Prince Kurbski, a distinguished captain whom the tsar had placed at the head of the army operating in Livonia, betrayed his country and fled to Lithuania after losing a battle. In Lithuania Prince Kurbski was richly compensated for his treachery with a grant of large estates, and appointed in command of one of the armies operating against his own country (Kurbski betrayed all Ivan's military plans to the enemy).

Kurbski's perfidy led to new executions. The boyars' treason and the setbacks suffered in Livonia brought to a head the question of concentrating all power in the tsar's hands, completely destroying the boyars' opposition, and wiping out the last traces of feudal disunity. These were the goals that Ivan IV sought to attain when he reorganized the state administration in the beginning of 1565. Distrusting the boyars who surrounded him, the tsar suddenly quitted Moscow with a bodyguard of his noblemen. He stopped at the fortified Alexandrova Sloboda (a village within 100 km. of Moscow), whence he wrote an epistle to Moscow, addressed to the metropolitan, in which he recounted the treacheries of the boyars and reproached the clergy for having interceded on behalf of the traitors. The tsar announced that he abdicated the throne. In another epistle to the Moscow merchants and the people, the tsar wrote that "he had no anger whatever against them." Under pressure of the Moscow populace, a deputation of the clergy and boyars went to Alexandrova Sloboda to implore the tsar to return to Moscow.



Alexandrova Sloboda. *From a contemporary drawing*

Ivan IV consented. He punished the boyar traitors, summoned the *Zemski Sobor* * (National Assembly) and set about organizing the *oprichnina*—a "separate estate" or select corps. The populace of the capital, frightened by the possibility of the boyars seizing power, welcomed the establishment of the new order in the realm and the institution of a reign of terror against the boyars.

Ivan IV divided the entire territory of the realm into two parts: the *zemshchina*, which was governed by the boyars' duma, under the direction of the tsar, and the *oprichnina*, which was governed by the tsar himself. The *oprichnina* consisted of the finest regions located in the centre of the realm, territories which were of great military or economic significance. The city of Moscow was similarly divided. The *oprichnina* and the *zemshchina* boyars and waywodes functioned side by side. There were administrative bodies (*prikazi*) which governed the *zemshchina* and administrative bodies which governed the *oprichnina*. The capital of the *oprichnina* was Alexandrova Sloboda (the village of Alexandrov) where the tsar felt himself more secure. The *oprichnina* was designed to crush the power of the great

* *Zemski Sobor*—a representative institution in Russia in the 16th-17th centuries. It consisted of the "holy alliance" (the clergy), the boyar duma and elected representatives of the provincial nobility, merchants, city craftsmen and state peasants. The nobility played the leading role in it.

feudal lords and create a corps from among the small landowning nobility, which could be relied upon to support a strong centralized state authority.

The rich feudal lords, especially the descendants of the appanage princes, had by no means lost their political power. "The state," Lenin points out, "broke up into separate lands, sometimes even into principalities which preserved the living traces of their former autonomy, and the peculiarities in their administration; sometimes they kept their own special troops (the local boyars went to war with their own regiments), special customs lines, etc."* Such a situation was incompatible with the interests of the centralized feudal realm which was in the making. All princes and boyars were therefore removed from the territory of the *oprichnina*. Their patrimonies were taken over "for the sovereign"; in exchange they were given other, by no means equivalent, estates in remote regions where they had no political ties whatever. Their former patrimonies were distributed among the petty nobility, who formed a select corps of *oprichniki*. The *oprichnina* was headed by Malyuta Skuratov, who enjoyed the confidence of the tsar. The chief task of the *oprichniki* was to uproot the remaining vestiges of feudal and boyar disunity. The *oprichniki* were selected from the small landowning nobility. With the help of the *oprichniki* the tsar inaugurated a reign of terror against the boyars. Ivan IV ruthlessly executed his enemies, and massacred the upper strata of the feudal lords including even their infants, and sparing neither their servants nor peasants.

The attempts of the powerful secular and ecclesiastical vassals to rally against the tsar failed. The metropolitan Philip, who belonged to the noble family of Kolychev, tried to intercede on behalf of the boyars, but was removed from office and exiled to a monastery, where he was secretly put to death. About 1567 the boyars entered into a far-reaching conspiracy, but it was discovered and the conspirators were executed. Novgorod, in which the traditions of its former political independence were still alive, was also involved in the conspiracy. Some of the Novgorodians, including the archbishop, were ready to betray their sovereign and transfer their allegiance to Lithuania. In January 1570 the tsar headed a large punitive expedition against Novgorod. For five weeks the *oprichniki* tortured the population of Novgorod and drowned them in the River Volkhov. The city itself was pillaged. From Novgorod, the tsar moved to Pskov; although he pillaged the city, no cruel executions took place here.

The *oprichnina* satisfied the class interests of the petty and middle nobility. By means of the *oprichnina* the nobility extended their land holdings, receiving as they did the patrimonies confiscated from the

* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1935, Vol. I, p. 73.

boyars. The nobility also used the *oprichnina* to bring pressure to bear on the peasantry. The *oprichniki* seized the lands of the peasants, raised quitrents, increased the corvée, transferred peasants from other lands to their own, and committed acts of violence.

**Strengthening the Tsarist Autocracy.** The ruination and partial extermination of the powerful feudal lords considerably strengthened the power of the tsar and his nobles, and resulted in the establishment of an autocracy.

Prince Kurbski expressed the feelings of the boyars who had been the victims of the *oprichnina*. He entered into a correspondence with Ivan IV from Lithuania, in which he accused the tsar of wanton cruelty, and attempted to vindicate the boyars accused of treason. A tsar should govern jointly with the boyars and listen to their counsel, Kurbski urged upon the tsar.

In his replies Ivan IV argued that the royal power was ordained by God. It was a heinous sin to disobey the tsar; all the tsar's subjects were his servants, whom it was his will to pardon or to execute. Any attempt to limit the power of the tsar was a crime, since it weakened the defence of the country.

The struggle among the feudal lords grievously affected all sections of the population. When the estates belonging to the disgraced boyars were devastated, the peasants were the first to suffer. The expedition against Novgorod was attended by such widespread desolation that for a long time the peasant households could not recover from the effects. One of the participants of this expedition, a German in the service of the *oprichnina*, named Heinrich Staden, boasted that whereas he had set out on the Novgorod campaign with a single horse, he had come back with forty-nine horses and twenty-two carts laden with booty.

In 1571 the Crimean khan, Devlet Girai, made an unexpected incursion. The khan marched unopposed on Moscow, burnt the entire city with the exception of the Kremlin, and carried off an enormous number of captives. On attempting to repeat the raid the following year Devlet Girai was stopped at the Oka River by the *zemski* waywodes, who saved Moscow from being ravaged a second time (1572).

The tsar realized the importance of uniting all the feudal lords against the country's external enemies. The *oprichnina* had by this time served its purpose. The last traces of feudal disunity had been eradicated. The boyars had been sufficiently weakened. Not only was the *oprichnina* no longer necessary, but it was even harmful, for it proved to have traitors in its midst. Executions began among the *oprichniki* themselves. In 1572 the *oprichnina* was abolished.

Despite its negative aspects, the *oprichnina* had promoted the centralization of the realm. "Nevertheless," says Staden, "the present

Grand Prince has secured the establishment of a single faith, a single weight, and a single measure throughout the land of Russia, throughout his realm! He governs alone. Everything that he commands is carried out, and everything that he forbids, does really remain forbidden. No one gainsays him, neither the clergy nor the laymen."

The autocracy promoted the consolidation of a centralized feudal realm and increased its powers of defence. It is therefore to be regarded as a beneficial influence in comparison with the former conditions of national disunity. The establishment of an autocracy was in the interests of the majority of the feudal class. The petty and middle nobility were able to secure their domination over the peasants and extend their estates only by means of the unlimited autocratic power of the tsar.

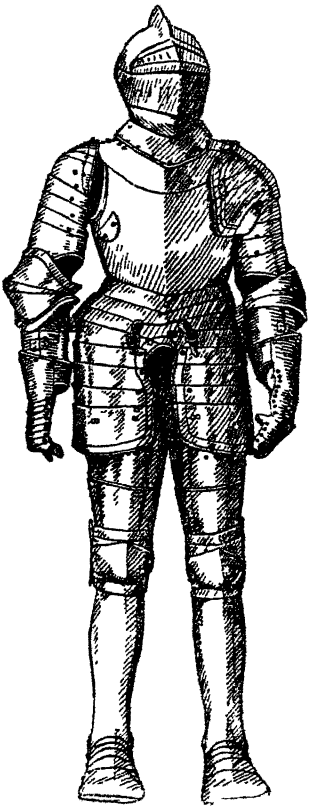
The autocracy also served the interests of the merchants, since the survivals of feudal disunity hampered the development of trade among the various regions of the country. The merchants therefore vigorously supported all the efforts of the tsar to strengthen the unity of the realm. On the other hand, a powerful state facilitated the seizure of new markets in the east and the west. The autocratic state was built up at the expense of the toiling peasantry. To the latter the autocracy brought heavier feudal oppression, and permitted the nobility to enthrall the peasants on their lands still more. But in those days the people believed in a benign tsar, and looked upon him as their protector against the evil boyars. The people therefore gave Ivan IV the imposing title of *Grozny* (the Dread), which to them signified mighty, just, and mercilessly cruel to the enemy.

## 41 END OF THE LIVONIAN WAR

**Progress of the Livonian War.** The interference of Sweden, Poland and Lithuania in the Livonian war extremely complicated the situation in the Baltic. Muscovy now had to contend not with an enfeebled Order, but with three powerful states. Ivan IV was supported by the National Assembly, consisting of representatives of the ruling classes, which he had convened in 1566. The assembly was attended by the church prelates, the military servitors of the capital, landlords from the Lithuanian border districts, and the rich merchants. The assembly insisted upon continuing the war until the whole of Livonia was annexed. Meanwhile a temporary truce was signed.

At the Diet which met at Lublin in 1569 a new union was formed, by which Poland and Lithuania constituted a single Polish-Lithuanian state, known as *Rzecz Pospolita*, ruled by an elected king. The powerful

Lithuanian feudal lords reluctantly consented to this arrangement, which threatened to curtail their own rights and privileges, but, as they themselves said, "the enemy was at their heels." Furthermore, they not only received no support from the Byelorussian and Ukrainian feudal lords, who were subject to Lithuania, but even from their own *szlachta* (gentry). The *szlachta* advocated a rapprochement with Poland, because they counted on receiving Poland's help against Muscovy. The Lithuanian gentry also endeavoured to secure for themselves the privileges which the Polish gentry enjoyed. The Union of Lublin considerably strengthened the Polish-Lithuanian coalition in the struggle against Russia.



Knight's armour. Western Europe, 16th century. *Historical Museum (Moscow)*

After the death of Sigismund-Augustus, the *Rzecz Pospolita* elected Stephen Bathory as king (1576). Within a short time he reorganized the army, creating a trained infantry of German and Hungarian mercenaries, and a good artillery. He replaced Polish-Lithuanian defensive tactics by a policy of active offensive.

In 1579 Bathory suddenly appeared before Polotsk. After nearly a month's siege, Polotsk was captured. Bathory did not confine himself to recovering the cities previously conquered by the Russians; he crossed the old frontier of the Russian state, with the aim of conquering Russia—"rich India" as he called it. In the autumn of 1581 he invested Pskov with an army of 100,000, and after surrounding the city with a network of trenches, proceeded to bombard it. When a breach had been made, the besiegers stormed the walls and seized two towers. The Russians blew up one of them and drove the enemy out of the other. The Poles withdrew after sustaining heavy casualties. Although the siege became a protracted one, Bathory was unable to take Pskov.

Ivan IV was simultaneously obliged to wage war against Sweden, who likewise laid claim to the Baltic province and had captured the



Embassy of Ivan IV to the German Imperial Diet in Regensburg.
*From a German coloured engraving of the 16th century*

city of Revel. The attempts of the Russian troops to capture Revel failed. The Swedes had carried their arms into Russian Karelia, and were conquering Russian cities. Thus Ivan IV met with failure on all fronts.

**Conclusion of Peace.** The heroic defence of Pskov made possible the opening of peace negotiations. A truce was concluded with Poland in 1582. Ivan IV renounced all his conquests in Livonia; Bathory returned the Russian cities he had taken. The next year a truce was also signed with Sweden, at the cost of abandoning to it the cities captured by the Swedes (Yam, Koporye, Ivan-gorod). Thus, the 25 years' war (1558-1583) for possession of the Baltic seaboard came to nothing. Here was reflected the backwardness of the Russian state. This war was, however, inevitable—the blockade of Russia by Poland, Sweden and Germany had to be broken at all costs. The war also demonstrated to Western Europe the strength of the new realm and its readiness to fight for the Baltic.

**Ivan IV.** Ivan IV died in 1584. He was a man of great natural ability and foresight. Well-educated for his time, he liked to write and wrote well, and possessed a keen and subtle intellect. Both in his home and foreign policy he mapped out the country's aims and tasks with sagacity and profound judgment and prosecuted them doggedly and indefatigably. His conception of Russia's

needs of the Baltic seaboard does credit to his farsightedness, but his idea was not realized until the reign of Peter I. In his conflict with the boyars Ivan IV espoused the cause of a centralized feudal state, at the head of which he stood. He wrote to Kurbski "Who can wage war against the enemies if the realm is rent by internecine strife?" Unbalanced and turbulent, Ivan IV was not always responsible for his actions. In a fit of ungovernable fury he struck his eldest son, Prince Ivan, a blow with his staff, which proved fatal. The reign of Ivan IV marked a very important period in the history of Russia. Under him the Russian state put an end to feudal partition and became a united, powerful state capable of defending itself against its external enemies. During his rule the international prestige of Russia grew immeasurably



Ivan IV *From a German engraving of the 16th century*

Ivan IV has gone down in folk songs and legends as a "dread" tsar who dealt out punishment to the boyar traitors.

## 42. SUBJUGATION OF THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN SIBERIA AT THE END OF THE 16TH CENTURY

**The Stroganov Domains.** At the close of Ivan IV's reign Russia commenced the subjugation of Western Siberia. The first steps in this direction were undertaken by the rich salt traders, the Stroganovs. Six years after the conquest of Kazan (1558) they secured permission from the Moscow government to seize the lands along the Kama. Having ousted the natives, the Mansi (Voguls), the Stroganovs started to set up salt works on which they employed the gratuitous labour of serf settlers. For the protection of their domains the Stroganovs built fortified settlements, equipped with artillery, and guarded by volunteers. The tsar made the Stroganovs absolute sovereigns on their patrimonies. The Mansi and other peoples whom the Stroganovs had robbed of their lands and salt mines frequently attacked the settlements. On occasions they united with the Stroganov peasants

against their common exploiters. In this struggle the Mansi were aided by their tribesmen living east of the Urals.

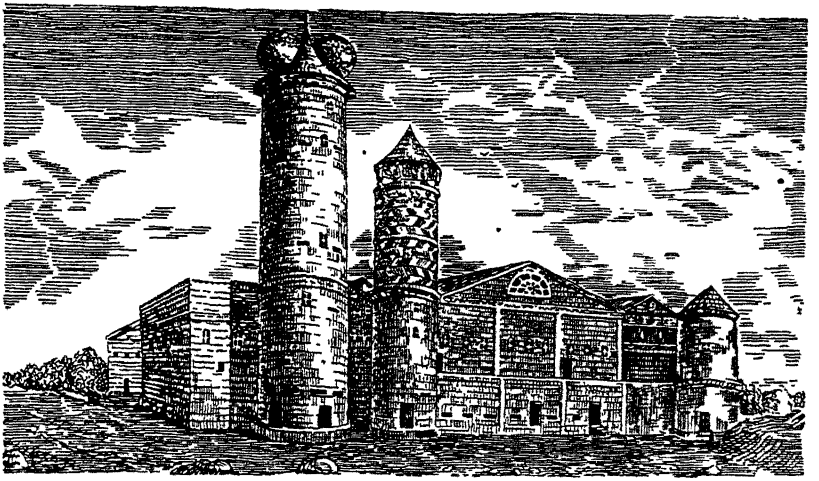
The head of the Siberian khanate at that time was Khan Kuchum. He killed Yediger, the vassal and tributary of the Moscow tsar, and took possession of Siberia. Ambitious to strengthen the Siberian khanate, Kuchum Khan endeavoured to extend his possessions west of the Ural Mountains. He adopted the Moslem faith as a means of consolidating his power.

**The Expedition of Yermak.** In the 16th century there were many "Free Cossacks"* living in the Don steppes on the outskirts of the Russian state. In the main they were peasants and thralls who had fled from the oppression of their feudal lords. The Stroganovs enlisted their services and organized them into military detachments for the purpose of protecting their existing possessions and extending them further eastward. In 1581 the Stroganovs fitted out a detachment of Cossack mercenaries whom they supplied with food, arms, and boats, and sent across the Urals under the leadership of ataman Yermak Timofeyevich. The detachment sailed up the Chusovaya River, a tributary of the Kama, and after spending the winter in a mountain pass, hauled their boats in the spring by portage to one of the tributaries of the Tura River, which flows into the Tobol. The country was sparsely populated and the Cossacks advanced without hardly meeting any opposition. Coming out on the Tobol, they entered the territory of the Siberian khanate. They encountered their first serious resistance not far from the capital of the Siberian khanate, where the Tobol River flows into the Irtysh. Here Kuchum had erected a fortified outpost and rallied a large force among his subject Tatar and Ural-Altaic tribes—the Mansi (Voguls) and the Khanti (Ostiaks), who met the Cossacks with a rain of arrows. The Cossacks retorted with their firearms and attacked the fort. A hand-to-hand fight ensued. The Khanti and Mansi were unable to withstand the onslaught and were the first to take flight, throwing the ranks of the Tatars into confusion. The Cossacks pursued and slew the fleeing enemy After this defeat Kuchum abandoned his capital and fled south into the steppe; Yermak and his Cossacks entered a deserted town. The neighbouring population hastened to submit to the conqueror. Realizing that it would be impossible for a small band to hold out among a hostile people Yermak sent messengers to Moscow informing the tsar of the conquest of the Siberian khanate and asking for help.

While waiting for assistance, the Cossacks went on with their subjugation of the outlying lands. The natives, armed only with spears and arrows mostly tipped with bone instead of iron, were unable

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* Cossack (Kazak or Kazakh) from the Turkic meaning "a man who has separated from his tribe" or a "free" person



The Stroganov mansion in Solvychegodsk. *From an 18th century drawing*

to contend against the Cossacks' firearms. Despite its swift success, Yermak's small detachment soon found itself in difficulties. Even the arrival of an auxiliary detachment of the tsar's troops did not save the situation. Owing to a shortage of food, the Russian men succumbed to scurvy. Yermak himself perished after falling into an ambush laid for him by Kuchum. Yermak missed his footing in attempting to leap into his boat and was drowned in the Irtysh. The survivors were forced to abandon Siberia. The khanate capital was once more occupied by the Tatars.

**Annexation of Western Siberia.** It was not until after Ivan IV's death that waywodes were sent into Siberia at the head of a strong force. In 1586 they built the city of Tyumen on the ruins of the Tatar city bearing the same name, whence they commenced the gradual conquest of the land. The following year a small settlement, Tobolsk, was founded on the Tobol not far from Kuchum's former capital, which had been completely abandoned by its inhabitants. Tobolsk became the centre of tsarist dominion in Western Siberia. The years that followed saw the conquest of the neighbouring tribes of Mansi and Khanti.

However, the struggle against Kuchum was not yet over. He continued to roam the Baraba steppe and constantly harassed the frontier regions. It was not until 1598 that Kuchum suffered a complete defeat, one from which he never recovered.

The relatively quick victory over the Siberian khanate is accounted for not only by the technical superiority of the Russian troops, but

also by the absence of political unity among the Tatars. The Siberian khanate was split up into a number of small domains loosely held together. Kuchum's vassals deserted him at the first rebuff. Still weaker was the association between the Siberian khanate and its vassal Ostiak and Vogul princelings who had taken part in the khan's war only under compulsion and had fled at the first opportunity.

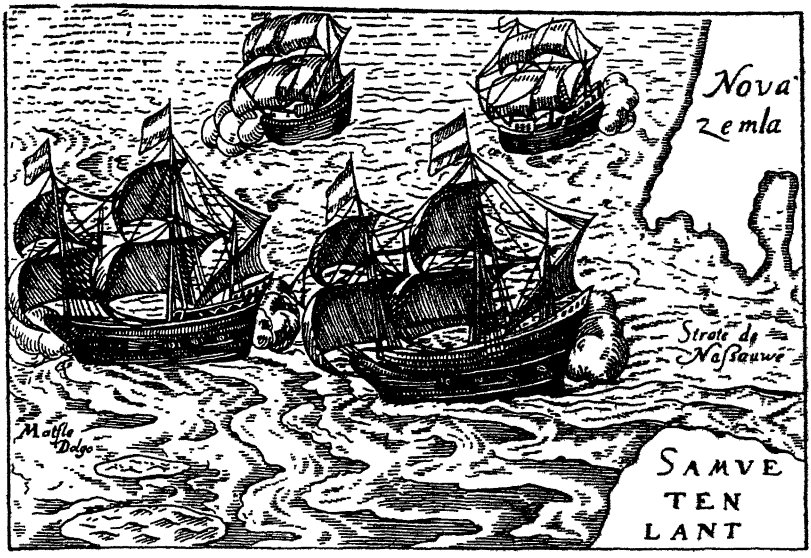
The subjugated peoples were taxed with a tribute, which went into the tsar's treasury. The tribute was paid in sable skins and other valuable furs. In addition to the royal tribute the Siberian peoples had to make gifts to the waywodes and the military. Hostages were taken to enforce the payment of tribute. The government also resorted to bribes by rewarding the local princelings with miscellaneous gewgaws for regular payment of tribute and according them the "sovereign favour," *i.e.*, treating them with wine, etc. The Siberian furs were very valuable, and sold by the state in foreign countries they constituted an important source of revenue to cover military and other expenses of the realm.

The military penetration of Siberia was closely followed by the infiltration of Muscovy merchants. They carried with them cheap merchandise such as little bells, fragments of fabric, and various other trifles in exchange for which they acquired valuable furs from the Siberian peoples. The merchants would shamelessly get the taiga people drunk and obtain their sables and other furs from them for a mere song. But Russian peasants and Russian artisans also came to Western Siberia. They brought with them the technique of the Russian crafts and the three-field system of tillage, which was unknown to the Siberians before the appearance of the Russians.

Thus in the 16th century the dominion of the Muscovy tsars had extended over a number of other peoples besides the Russians—the Kazan and Astrakhan Tatars, the Mordvinians, the Mari, Chuvashes, Udmurts, Bashkirs and the peoples of Western Siberia. Thus Russia gradually became a multi-national state. The non-Russian, weaker peoples were forcibly incorporated into the powerful Russian nation.

## 43. CRAFTS AND TRADE IN RUSSIA IN THE 16TH CENTURY

The coalescence of Eastern Europe into a centralized multi-national state was only possible with the development of economic intercourse between the various territories of the realm. The development of money-commodity relations that took place in the 16th century stimulated the economic unification of the country and facilitated the process of political consolidation.




Dutch ships off the Russian coast in the Arctic Ocean *From an engraving in a book by Herrit de Weert*

Petty handicraft production was prevalent in the cities and villages of Russia in the 16th century. In large cities such as Novgorod and Kazan over a hundred different kinds of handicraft production existed. There were masters who specialized in the manufacture of metal implements and various kinds of metal wares such as earrings, pins, nails, etc., and the sewing of *sarafans*, mantles, warm sleeveless jackets, etc. The products of the artisans were bought up by merchants who conveyed them to Siberia where they were exchanged for furs, which were then resold to foreigners. In this way connections were established between the various markets, which eventually became amalgamated into a single all-Russian market.

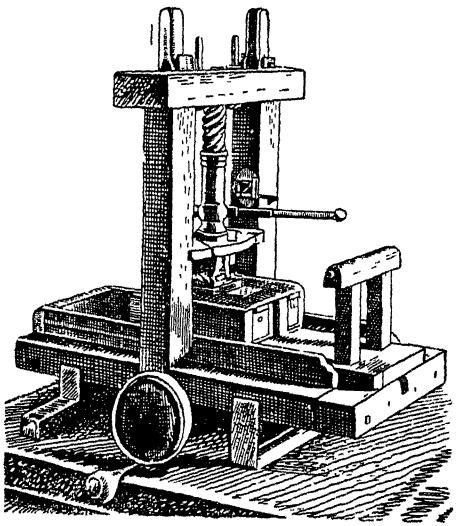
Russia's commerce with the East and the West developed considerably in the 16th century. With the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan the entire Volga waterway proved to be in Moscow's hands. This contributed to the stimulation of trade with Azerbaijan, Persia and Bokhara.

Intercourse between Russia and Western Europe was impeded by the intervening territories of a hostile Poland and Lithuania and the domains of the German Order.

The 16th century was the flourishing age of English commerce. English merchants were engaged in a strenuous struggle with the Spaniards and Portuguese, who had till then been masters of the

sea. The sea route to India (around Africa) was in the hands of the Portuguese. The English merchantry equipped an expedition to seek a route of communication with India via the Arctic Ocean, that is, through that Great Northern Sea Passage which only became available for navigation under Soviet power. The expedition failed But one ship, under the command of Captain Chancellor was carried by a storm into the White Sea and to the mouth of the Northern Dvina. Thus, in 1553 the English discovered a direct sea route to Russia. Chancellor entered into negotiations with the waywode of Kholmogor, who notified Ivan IV of the arrival of the English captain. The latter was summoned to the capital. Ivan IV fully appreciated all the advantages to be derived from direct relations with one of the richest mercantile countries of Europe. He granted the English the right of trading in the Russian empire on the most favourable terms. Russia's own industry was poorly developed. The country received from England woolen and other fabrics, metals and metal wares, as well as spices and other re-exports from Asia, Africa and America. In exchange the English merchants took Russian raw materials such as furs, hemp, pork, etc., and also acquired eastern goods, especially Azerbaijan silks.

Upon the heels of the English came the Dutch, who also began to use the White Sea route for trade with Muscovy. Soon after the death of Ivan IV the city of Archangel was built not far from the mouth of the Northern Dvina. Fairs at which Russian traders met foreign merchants were held here annually. But the White Sea was covered with ice for a great part of the year, and could only be used in the summer months. This explains Russia's persistent efforts to obtain a footing on the Baltic seaboard.



A printing press of the 16th century. *Restored*

Active commerce with Western Europe and the East had a very stimulating effect on the Russian home market. Traders were attracted eastward, to the Urals, for valuable furs; and nautical expeditions were equipped to the Gulf of Ob in quest of sable hunting grounds.

## 44 LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE 16TH CENTURY

**Russian Customs in the 16th Century.** During the period of the Tatar-Mongol yoke civilization in the Russian state was behind that of Western Europe. Prevailing family customs were generally crude. The father was lord and master both of his serfs and his wife and children.

A book was written in the 16th century, called *Domostroi*, which was a sort of code of household instructions and worldly wisdom for the edification of the ruling classes. Much space in this volume is devoted to the upbringing of children and the schooling of a man's wife, in "the ways of virtue." The rules laid down by the *Domostroi*, however, were not far removed from harsh reality. It recommended that one's wife and children should be kept under rigorous constraint. The *Domostroi* was the favourite reading of literate Russians in the 16th century. It has come down to us in a transcription made by the priest Sylvester for his son.

**Enlightenment and Art in the 16th Century.** Very few Russians were literate. Even among the clergy there were men who were barely able to spell. Books were manuscript, and therefore rare and costly. Ignorant transcribers made many mistakes and omissions which often distorted the meaning. The greatest demand was for fortune-telling books, which were looked upon as some sort of magic. The crudest superstitions were prevalent.

Ivan IV realized that education was necessary in order to combat ignorance. In 1551 a synod (convocation of the clergy) was held in Moscow for the purpose of strengthening the authority of the church. At this assembly the tsar proposed that measures should be taken to remedy the more flagrant depravities in the life of the clergy (drunkenness, etc.) and to spread enlightenment among the population. The clergy were directed to open up schools for teaching children to read and write. The decisions of the assembly formed a volume which was called *Stoglav* (meaning a hundred chapters), but these decisions were not carried out. Ivan IV did not succeed in creating his schools because there were too few people in Russia at that time sufficiently educated to teach.

Despite all difficulties, Ivan IV founded a printing press in Moscow, which struck off several scriptural books. Two Russian masters, Ivan Fyodorov and Peter Mstislavets, worked at this printing press. The first Russian printed book appeared in 1564. Technically, it was done well. Many people in those days regarded printed books as the work of the devil. The semi-literate copyists feared that with the development of printing they might lose their means of livelihood. They incited a mob to wreck the "printing establishment." Ivan Fyodorov and his colleague continued their useful activities in Bye-



A page from "Apostol," the first book printed in Russia (1564)

lorussia and the Ukraine and did much for the development of printing. Ivan IV was not to be daunted by his first failure. He set up a new printery in Alexandrova Sloboda, where the first Russian secular book, a history of Russia's and Poland's international relations, was printed (1570).

While literacy among the masses was poorly developed, there were educated people among the Moscow clergy and boyars in the 16th century. They produced several outstanding writers, chief among whom was the metropolitan Makari. Under his patronage there arose a small group of literary men. Other books appeared, among them the *Stepennaya Kniga* ("Book of Degrees," or "Pedigrees") being a history of the rise of Muscovy from the Kiev Prince, Vladimir, and his grandmother, Olga, down to Ivan IV. Tsar Ivan IV himself was a writer of no mean gifts. Prince Kurbski, who was well educated, was also a man of letters. He was the author of the *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow*—a book of reminiscences on the reign of Ivan IV, written in defence of the boyars and sharply hostile to the tsar. Kurbski's epistles to Tsar Ivan showed remarkable literary merit for the times.

An original and vivid native Russian art came into being in the 16th century. An outstanding example of the architecture of those days is the church in the village of Kolomenskoye near Moscow and the St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, now turned into a museum. The cathedral, which was built by the Russian craftsmen Postnik-Yakovlev and Barma, is a veritable masterpiece of ancient Russian art. Pskov craftsmen were also famous as painters. Their work bears traces of Western influence.

The spread of education was hampered by the fact that Russia was cut off from the more cultured countries of Western Europe by Poland and Lithuania. Fearing that with the spread of education Russia would grow too powerful, the Polish and Lithuanian feudal lords, as well as the Pope, the German emperor and the Swedish king did their utmost to prevent the establishment of regular intercourse between Russia and Europe.

# THE PEOPLES OF RUSSIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

*Chapter XIV*

## THE PEASANT WAR AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POLISH AND SWEDISH INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

### 45. THE RUSSIAN STATE BEFORE THE PEASANT WAR

**Serfdom.** In the second half of the 16th century, the lot of the peasants became a very hard one. The landed proprietors, who were in financial straits, extended seignorial tilths and increased taxation of the peasants in money and kind. Formerly the extent of the peasant's servile tenures had been fixed by custom: the peasant tilled the seignorial land and paid his quitrent "as of old." Ignoring this established tradition, the landlords, in the 16th century, themselves determined the payments and tenures of their peasants. The royal proclamations required the peasants to obey their landlords in all things, to do whatever the landlords told them to do, pay their quitrent, etc.

Great expenditures had been incurred by the Livonian war. The monetary taxes imposed on the peasants and the urban trading population and craftsmen were increased manifold. Seeking to escape

from oppressive labour, taxation and starvation, the peasants left their homes and villages *en masse* and went to the east, beyond the Volga; even more went south, beyond the Oka River, where lay the almost uninhabited black-earth steppe, and where a fugitive peasant could not easily be found. This migration of the peasants caused a serious void in the central regions.

Deprived of labour hands the feudal estates of the landlords found themselves in a difficult plight. The landowners who suffered from a shortage of hands competed with others in trying to attract settlers to their lands. Every year on the eve of St. George's Day this keen competition for peasant labour opened up anew. Most of the peasants lacked the money to settle accounts with their landlords. The bailiffs of competing landlords would then make the settlement on their behalf and convey the peasants to the estates of their new masters. Rich, powerful landowners would even organize raids on their neighbours' estates, and carry off the peasants in chains to their new domicile. The lower and middle ranks of the nobles complained that they were unable to render the military service required of their depopulated estates.

In 1581, during the defence of Pskov, Tsar Ivan IV temporarily, "pending the royal ukase" prohibited peasants to migrate on St. George's Day. The year when the peasants were forbidden to change their domicile even on St. George's Day was called the first *zapovedni* year (year of interdict). The peasants were still more strongly fettered to the soil of the landlords.

**The Cossacks.** With the growth of serfage in the central regions of Russia there occurred a notable swelling of the ranks of the Cossacks at the end of the 16th century, due to the influx of the Russian population to the outskirts of the country—to the upper reaches of the Oka, the Bryansk forests and to the Don. The steppe, which abounded in wild fowl, and the rivers teeming with fish could sustain a relatively large population on the Don. The Cossacks felt safe here from the tyranny of the landlords and the tsar's waywodes. They did not engage in agriculture, but imported corn from Russian cities.

The Cossacks fought against Tatar and Turkish domination on the Azov and Black seas; when in luck they obtained good booty, which they divided among themselves. Sometimes the Cossacks also robbed Russian merchants on the Volga. All matters of common interest concerning expeditions, the division of spoil and relations with Moscow, were decided by the Cossacks at a meeting which was called *krug* (circle). At these *krugs* they also elected their chiefs—*atamans*.

**Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich.** When Tsar Ivan IV (Grozny) died, he left two sons: Fyodor, a son by his first wife, Anastasia Romanova, and the infant Dimitry, by his last wife, Maria Nagaya. Fyodor Ivanovich became tsar (1584-1598). Tsarevich Dimitry, his mother,

and her kinsfolk, the Nagiye, were banished to the small town of Uglich, which was given the young prince as his "appanage." Indeed Tsarevich Dimitry was the last of the appanage princes (1584-1591).

Tsar Fyodor was a sickly man of weak intellect and saintly character; very ill-fitted to govern the country. He spent his days in constant prayer, had a special fondness for ringing the church bells and amused himself with his jesters. The people openly called the new tsar a "fool." The power and government of the kingdom were seized by the tsar's relatives and his chosen boyars. Before long the boyar, Boris Fyodorovich Godunov, came to the fore.

The Godunov family did not belong to the ancient Russian peerage. Boris Godunov had been intimate with Ivan IV during his last years chiefly because of his family ties. Fyodor Ivanovich was married to Godunov's sister, Irene. Boris Godunov was a man of sterling qualities and ability, but he had not received a "bookish" (*i.e.*, a theological) education. Unlike the well-born boyars he was no respector of time-honoured usage, nor did he shun foreigners. One of Boris Godunov's first acts was to banish from the court those boyars who interfered with his rule. He himself received foreign ambassadors. He ran his household on the lines of the royal court.

Boris Godunov was fully alive to the significance of the church in the empire. The Orthodox church in Russia was administered by the metropolitan, resident in Moscow. The supreme authority in the Russian church was the patriarch who had his diocese in Constantinople, in a country that was subject to the Turkish sultan. At the end of the 16th century the patriarchs began paying visits to Moscow on "errands of charity" to crave money or sable skins. Taking advantage of the arrival of the Constantinople patriarch Jeremiah on such an errand of charity, Boris Godunov secured his consent to the institution of a separate patriarchate for the Russian church. In 1589 the first Russian patriarch was the metropolitan Job, one of Boris Godunov's adherents.

During the last years of Tsar Fyodor's life the direction of affairs passed entirely into Boris Godunov's hands. He did much to strengthen the royal power and the authority of the nobility in the provinces.

The happy outcome of the second Livonian war (1590-1595) was of great significance. After the failure of the first Livonian war (1558-1583), Sweden had seized part of the Baltic seaboard that bordered closely on Muscovy's domains. Sweden had cut Russia off from the sea and from economic and cultural intercourse with Western Europe, thus endeavouring to perpetuate Russia's backward state of development.

The year 1590 saw the beginning of war with Sweden for an outlet to the sea, a war for the recovery of old Russian Baltic lands. According to the terms of the peace treaty concluded in 1595, restitution

was made to Russia of her Russian territories on the coast of the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga (Ivangorod, Yam, Koporye, Karela). Besides military affairs, a problem that particularly disturbed the government was that of providing the landlords with peasants, for the latter still continued their spontaneous migrations to the borderlands of the south, east and north. In order to return a runaway peasant to his landlord it had to be proved that the fugitive had really lived on that land before he absconded. To facilitate this task, a new census was made of the land and population, the work being completed during the years of the war (1592-1593). All peasants who were thus registered as belonging to a certain landlord were henceforth considered his adscripts, or serfs. In 1597 a ukase was issued, establishing a five-year term for seeking out runaway peasants. Those not found during these five years (*i.e.*, between 1597 and 1602), remained at their new abodes.



Fyodor Ivanovich.
Early 17th century portrait.
*Historical Museum (Moscow)*

In the second half of the 16th century, the population became so impoverished that many of the people borrowed money on the condition that they would work and serve on the estate of their creditor in lieu of interest. Such dependent people were called *kabalniye kholopi*—bondsmen, or serfs. After the death of their master they received their liberty. In this respect they differed from absolute bondsmen, whose servile tenure was hereditary. Formerly a freeman who worked for another in return for his bread and clothing was free to leave his master at will if he had not signed himself in bond. This ruling was now repealed. According to the ukase of 1597 any freeman who worked for another for his bread and clothing for more than six months became that person's serf. In this way Boris Godunov still further increased the servitude of the peasants and serfs in the interests of the landlords. The city poor likewise were increasingly oppressed.

In 1591 a rebellion broke out among the townsfolk of Uglich in connection with the following incident.

The tsar's younger brother, Tsarevich Dimitry, who had been living with his mother at Uglich, died on May 15, 1591. The morning of that day the nine-year-old Dimitry had been playing a knife game

with his playfellows, under the supervision of his nurse and governess, when he suddenly dropped to the ground in an epileptic fit, and in doing so fell on the blade which he was holding in his hand, and cut his throat. The cries of the women brought his mother, Maria Nagaya, out of the house. She began to shout that the boy had been murdered by some men sent by the Moscow scribe Bityagovsky. The crowd that gathered took advantage of the occasion to start a rebellion. The town poor demolished the scribe's cottage and destroyed all the records concerning their bondage. Bityagovsky and several of his friends were killed. Streltsi (soldiers) arrived from Moscow with a committee of enquiry, headed by Prince Vasili Shuiski. The latter pronounced that the tsarevich had accidentally inflicted the fatal wound upon himself. The Tsaritsa Maria Nagaya was made to take the veil, while her relatives and many people of Uglich were exiled for taking the law into their own hands. A rumour was spread among the people that the tsarevich had been killed on Boris Godunov's orders.

**Tsar Boris Godunov.** With the death of Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich in 1598 the Rurik dynasty of Russian tsars came to an end.

On the death of Tsar Fyodor, Boris Godunov, having won the support of the nobility, had no dangerous rivals. The National Assembly (*Zemsky Sobor*) which met in 1598 and on which the nobles and merchants were in the majority, elected Boris Godunov as the Tsar of Muscovy. Boris Godunov continued Ivan IV's policy of introducing order into the realm. He too persecuted the descendants of the ancient families of princes and boyars. The scions of the late boyar, Nikita Romanovich Zakharyin, or the Romanovs, as they came to be called, gave him special cause for anxiety. The Romanovs were related to Tsar Fyodor, and the eldest of them, Fyodor Nikitich, had many followers among the nobility and part of the townsfolk. Boris Godunov made use of secret information against the Romanovs to accuse them of plotting against the tsar, and exiled all the brothers to the north. The oldest of them, Fyodor Romanov, was tonsured under the name of "Father Philaret." Godunov triumphed over his boyar enemies. But he was now confronted with a new, ominous danger—the peasant movement.

In 1601 a famine set in. Rains and early autumn frosts had killed the harvest. The following spring the fields under winter rye yielded no crops The peasants did not even have seed for the spring sowing. The starving population lived on weeds and birch bark. Whole villages died out. Even in Moscow corpses lay unburied about the streets. The terrible famine lasted three years (1601-1603). The landlords, monasteries and merchants, who had large stocks of corn, made the most of the high prices on corn to build up large fortunes The boyars and the nobles refused to feed their serf domestics and drove them off

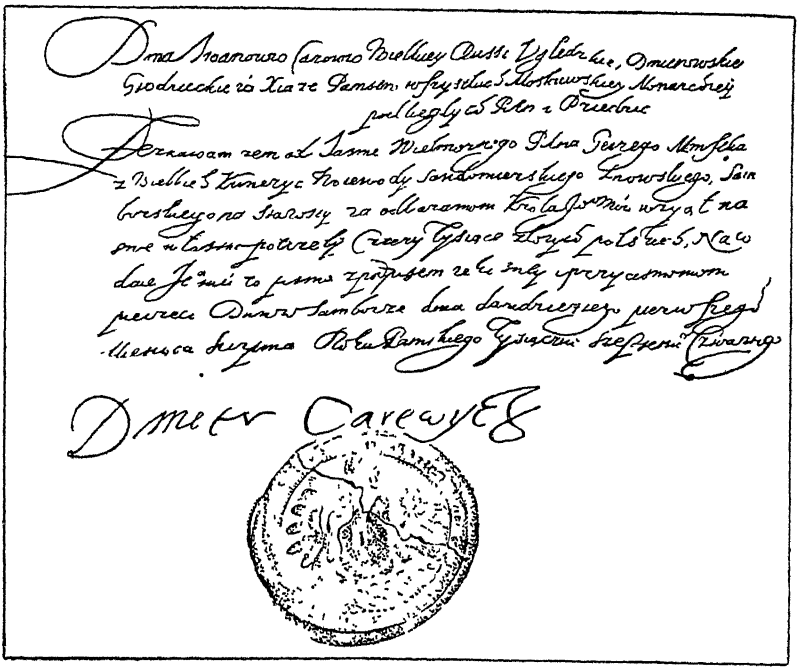
their estates. Fearing hunger riots, Boris Godunov gave orders for corn to be distributed from the state granaries, but the distributors got more of it than the famine-stricken people. Government stocks were inadequate to feed the starving population. On the other hand the landowners, including the monks and the patriarch, had full granaries, but they delayed releasing corn for sale, in the expectation of prices mounting still higher.

The starving peasants and serfs started forming detachments and attacked the landlords and merchants. Others left for the Don and the Bryansk forests. In 1603 a large detachment of peasants and serfs, under the leadership of Khlopko Kosolap made its way to the outskirts of the capital. A fierce battle took place, during which the tsar's waywode, Ivan Basmanov, was killed. The royal troops had great difficulty in driving off the insurgents from the capital. Khlopko Kosolap, covered with wounds, was taken prisoner and soon died. Many of the peasants and serfs were hung by the tsar's waywodes on trees along the roads leading to Moscow.

## 46. ATTEMPTS OF POLISH GENTRY TO SUBJUGATE THE RUSSIAN STATE FALSE DIMITRY I

**The Polish Minion, False Dimitry I.** Soon after the conclusion of truce with Muscovy, the Polish king, Stephen Bathory, conceived a new plan for conquering Russia. However, after his death (in 1586) Poland's internal condition did not permit her to begin open warfare. Under the new king, Sigismund III, Poland decided to take advantage of the peasant uprising in Russia to seize and subjugate the country. To accomplish this purpose Poland used the pretender—False Dimitry I as their tool: This plan of intervention was energetically supported by the Pope. The rumour that Tsarevich Dimitry had not been murdered at Uglich, but had escaped and was living in Poland was spread soon after Boris Godunov ascended the throne. At this time a man appeared at the castle of *pan* Adam Wisniowiecki in the Ukraine who declared himself to be Dimitry, the son of Ivan IV. When the Moscow government heard of the appearance of the impostor in Poland, it declared the False Dimitry to be no other than the former monk, Grigori Otrepyev, born of a family of petty Kostroma nobles. In his youth he had wandered from monastery to monastery, had spent some time in Moscow, and then fled to Poland with three other monks. The identity of the False Dimitry is still obscure.

The news of the appearance of False Dimitry was enthusiastically greeted by the Polish gentry. False Dimitry was removed to a relative of Wisniowiecki's, the waywode Yuri Mniszek of Sambor. In the spring of 1604 King Sigismund III received the False Dimitry in



Receipt given by False Dimitry I to the waywode of Sandomierz, Y. Mniszek, for 4,000 *zloti*. *Historical Museum (Moscow)*

Cracow. After negotiations with the *gentry* and *szlachta* it was decided not to begin open war against Russia, but to permit all the gentry who wished to do so, to enlist in False Dimitry's army. All preparations for the campaign were made in Sambor. Its organizers were powerful Polish magnates avid for conquest of new domains. They were readily joined by the petty Polish gentry who dreamed of rich spoils in Russia.

False Dimitry made specious promises to the Pope, the Polish king and the gentry. He adopted the Catholic faith and undertook to convert the Russian population to the Roman church. He also promised the king the city of Smolensk and the land of Seversk (Chernigov). To Mniszek's family False Dimitry planned to turn over the administration of the Novgorod and Pskov regions, as well as money and jewels from the tsar's treasury. On these terms Yuri Mniszek agreed to the marriage of his daughter Marina to False Dimitry; Marina was to become the Russian tsaritsa.

Late in the autumn of 1604 False Dimitry and a Polish contingent of 4,000 soldiers and several hundred Russian Cossacks crossed the

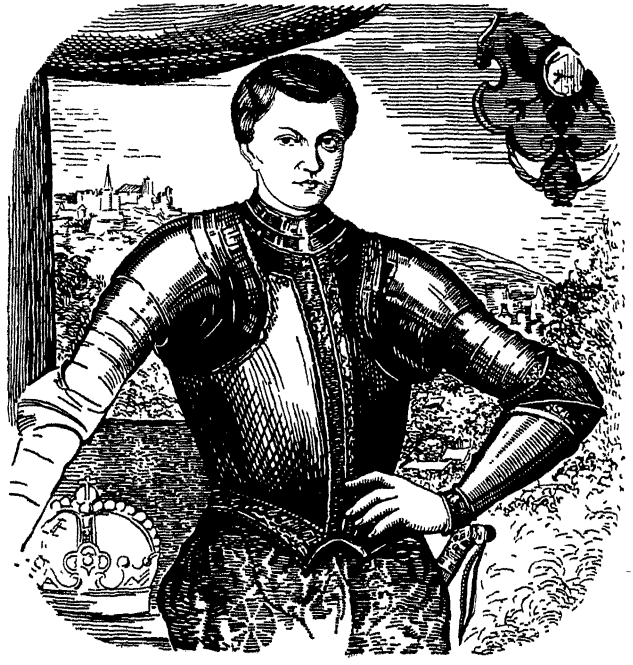
Dnieper near Kiev. The first cities surrendered to False Dimitry practically without offering any resistance. Cossacks, fugitive peasants, serfs, the petty military servitors—all who were dissatisfied with Boris Godunov—rallied to False Dimitry. At first the misled peasants really believed that False Dimitry was the son of Ivan Grozny and hoped that he would free them from serf bondage. Towards the end of 1604 the tsar's army went to the relief of Novgorod-Seversk which was besieged by the Poles and False Dimitry. A battle took place near this city, but without any decisive result. False Dimitry tried to avoid the tsar's troops and headed for Sevsk. In January 1605 he was defeated at the village of Dobrynichi, near Sevsk and fled to Putivl with the remnants of his force.

In spite of his victory, Boris Godunov's position became increasingly worse, as ever new detachments of insurgents kept appearing in many places. The tsar's main forces were engaged in besieging the small fortress of Kromy in which a body of Don Cossacks who had joined False Dimitry had entrenched themselves. But the tsar's troops refused to fight; many of the soldiers deserted from the army and went home.

In April 1605 Tsar Boris Godunov suddenly died. His sixteen-year-old son, Fyodor, was proclaimed tsar. The death of Boris Godunov removed the last barrier to the progress of the pretender. At Kromy the remnants of the tsar's troops, under Peter Basmanov, went over to False Dimitry.

The boyars, eager to see the downfall of the hated Godunovs, hastened to effect a coup in favour of the alleged Tsarevich Dimitry, with the intention of subsequently seizing the power themselves. Prince Vasili Ivanovich Shuiski retracted his former testimony concerning the death of Tsarevich Dimitry at Uglich, and declared that Godunov had wanted to kill the tsarevich, but that the latter had escaped death, that he was alive and on his way to the capital. When False Dimitry's heralds arrived in Moscow with his message to the people, the boyars assassinated Tsar Fyodor Borisovich and his mother. False Dimitry approached Moscow without encountering any further resistance. In June 1605 the Poles made their entry into the Russian capital.

**False Dimitry in Moscow.** Soon after False Dimitry, with the aid of the Poles, seized the throne of the tsar, he revealed his true aims. The lot of the peasants was in no way alleviated. The fugitive peasants, except those who had left during the famine because of their inability to feed themselves, were returned to their former landlords. The Polish gentry who had come with False Dimitry aroused the general indignation of the Russian population by their arrogant and insolent behaviour. False Dimitry surrounded himself with a bodyguard of



False Dimftry I in Polish dress From a contemporary portrait.
*Historical Museum (Moscow)*

foreign mercenaries. He sent large sums of money to Poland. In Moscow the people openly complained against the tsar.

In the spring of 1606 Marina came to Moscow, in the company of a huge suite and new detachments of the Polish gentry. The marriage of Marina and False Dimitry was noisily celebrated and wassail was held for several days. The drunken *szlachta* committed new excesses. Hatred for the Poles, who conducted themselves so insolently in the Russian capital, reached such a pitch that a popular outbreak could be expected any day.

The boyars took advantage of this discontent on the part of the population to form a conspiracy, headed by Prince V. I. Shuiski.

At dawn on May 17, 1606, the tolling of a bell gave the signal for an alarm throughout the capital. The Muscovites shouted to each other: "On against the Litvas! Down with the Litvas!" (The Russians called the Poles "Litvas.")

False Dimitry learned of the danger when a crowd had already filled the square in front of the palace. In attempting to escape he leapt out of a window, and seriously hurt himself in the fall. He was

found and killed. A few days later the body of False Dimitry was burnt, the ashes being rammed into a cannon and shot back in the direction whence he had come. Meanwhile, the populace throughout the city were engaged in a massacre of the Polish gentry, who had barricaded themselves in their houses. Using knives and stones the Muscovites attacked the houses which the well-armed Poles had converted into small fortresses. About 2,000 of the Polish gentry and soldiers were killed; the others surrendered.

Fearing the popular rebellion, the boyars hastened to stem it. What they needed first of all was to restore the royal authority. They accordingly proposed making the boyar V. I. Shuiski, who came from an ancient princely family, the tsar. The boyars were reluctant to convene the National Assembly for this purpose, fearing that most of the nobles and townspeople would be opposed to the boyars. Vasili Shuiski was therefore proclaimed tsar without any election. His name was shouted out to a crowd of people that had assembled before the Kremlin on May 19, and which consisted for the most part of Shuiski's faction.

Thus the first attempt of the Poles to place their own protégé on the Moscow throne ended in utter failure. The Russian people crushed the interventionists.

**Tsar Vasili Shuiski (1606-1610).** Vasili Shuiski gave the boyars his pledge that he would rule the country in agreement with them. The tsar was sworn in on the cross, pledging himself not to pass sentence of death, or confiscate the property of a convicted man's relatives without the consent of the boyars' duma. Proclamations were promulgated to the different cities, in which Shuiski proved his right to the throne. The wealthy boyars hastened to seize the best and most lucrative posts.

The ascension of Vasili Shuiski to the throne provoked a fresh outburst of dissatisfaction in the country. The nobles would not be reconciled to the usurpation ofpower by the boyars.Disturbances broke out in Moscow itself, among the poor townsfolk. Fearing an uprising in the capital, the boyars quickly prepared the Kremlin for defence, mounted cannon on its walls, and removed the permanent bridge which had been thrown across the moat at the fortress gates.

## 47. PEASANT INSURRECTION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF BOLOTNIKOV

**The Bolotnikov Movement.** In the autumn of 1606 a peasant war broke out in the southwestern cities, where numerous fugitive peasants and serfs had collected. They were joined by Cossacks and the petty ranks of the military servitors. On the Middle Volga the Mordvinians joined in the rebellion together with the Russian population. An insur-

rection broke out in the south, in Astrakhan, northwest of Moscow the peasants and townsfolk of Tver, Pskov and Novgorod, rose up in revolt. Thus, within a short space of time a considerable part of the country was swept by a wave of popular uprisings.

These rebellions, however, were sporadic and lacked coordination. They were simply isolated local outbreaks. While a rebellion was starting in one region it had already run its course in another. Thus the rebels were rarely in a position to help one another. The most powerful movement was that of the peasants, serfs and Cossacks led by Ivan Bolotnikov (1606-1607).

In his youth Bolotnikov had been a boyar's serf. Having fled to the Cossacks on the Don, he fell into the hands of the Tatars, who sold him into captivity to the Turks. For a while Bolotnikov worked at the oar on a galley, where he, like the other prisoners, was chained to his seat and "encouraged" with a whip. Bolotnikov succeeded in escaping from Turkish captivity. After visiting various European countries he made his way back to the Russian frontier. An uprising against Shuiski having just been started in the southwest border territories, Bolotnikov took command of the rebels. According to the accounts of contemporaries, he was a stalwart man of great physical strength, and remarkable intrepidity and bravery. Foreigners called Bolotnikov a daring and experienced "knight errant." In his battles against the tsar's troops he revealed real military talent.

Wherever Bolotnikov's detachments made their appearance the peasants rose up against the landlords and joined the insurgents. The poor townsfolk also went over to his side. Bolotnikov's army moved swiftly on Moscow from Putivl, via Kromy, Serpukhov and Kolomna, routing the tsar's detachments as it advanced. At Yelets the insurgents found large stores of arms which had been laid up by False Dimitry I. On the road to Moscow Bolotnikov was joined by Tula nobles (headed by Istoma Pashkov), who were dissatisfied with the boyars' government, and also by the brothers Prokopi and Zakhar Lyapunov, who led the Ryazan landlords. Supplemented by these detachments of nobles, Bolotnikov's army grew much larger, but it was less homogeneous and less reliable.

In the middle of October 1606 Bolotnikov appeared before Moscow. The capital was well protected by triple stone walls. Bolotnikov was unable to take it by storm, and he set down to a siege. He wrote appeals and circulated them among the population. The boyars called them "*prelestniye*" ("words of the tempter"). Bolotnikov called upon the peasants and serfs to exterminate the boyars and landlords, and promised them the land which had been seized by the feudal lords. The nobles in Bolotnikov's army realized that the peasants, their class enemies, represented a greater danger to them than the boyars' government.

The Ryazan nobles and the Lyapunov brothers went over to Shuiski.

In the beginning of December the tsar's troops, having received large reinforcements, attacked Bolotnikov's camp at the village of Kolomenskoye, near Moscow. At the height of the battle the Tula nobles, under Istoma Pashkov, also went over to Shuiski, their treachery facilitating the victory of the tsar's troops. Bolotnikov with the remnants of his detachment retreated to the south and entrenched themselves in Kaluga. Desirous of winning the nobles over to his side, Tsar Vasili Shuiski extended the period for the search of fugitive peasants from five to fifteen years. In the spring of 1607 a large tsarist army laid siege to Kaluga, but fresh detachments of rebels came to Bolotnikov's aid. Shuiski's troops suffered defeat and were forced to raise the siege. Bolotnikov moved to Tula, where he was joined by fresh Cossack contingents. Among them was a new pretender who claimed to be Peter, the son of Fyodor Ivanovich, though Tsar Fyodor had not had any sons.

The summer of that year Shuiski again rallied a big army.

For four months Bolotnikov defended himself in Tula against an overwhelmingly superior foe. In spite of hunger and a shortage of arms, the besieged made daring sallies every day and inflicted heavy losses upon the tsar's army. The tsar's waywodes feared that their troops would be unable to endure a winter siege. A dam was therefore built near Tula, to stop the flow of the Upa River. The water rushed into the city and flooded what remained of the food and powder supplies. Only then did the besieged enter into negotiations for surrender. Tsar Vasili Shuiski promised to give all the rebels their freedom. But he did not keep his word. Ivan Bolotnikov was sent north, to Kargopol, where he was blinded and drowned. Many of those who had taken part in the uprising were made *kholopi* (household slaves) and the serf peasants were handed over to the nobles.

The Bolotnikov rebellion, like all the other peasant uprisings in the period of feudalism, ended in the defeat of the rebels. These peasant uprisings were spontaneous outbreaks; the peasants and serfs were poorly armed; they had no military training, and could not wage a protracted war against the better organized and better armed troops of the tsar. The peasants felt the injustice and oppressiveness of feudal power, but did not know how to overthrow it. They believed in a "benign" tsar and hoped to obtain their emancipation from him.

Bolotnikov perished, his detachments were dispersed, but the revolt against Shuiski continued. On the Volga, the peoples enslaved by tsarism, the Mordvinians and the Mari (Cheremissi), rebelled. Together with the Russian peasants and serfs they besieged Nizhni Novgorod. The tsar's troops drove the rebels away from the city, but in the autumn of 1608 the whole Middle Volga was once more in the throes of a rebellion.

## 48. POLISH AND SWEDISH HOSTILITIES IN 1608-1610

**New Polish Minion, False Dimitry II.** The Poles did not cease their aggressive activities against Russia. On the very day that False Dimitry I died, the Poles spread a rumour in Moscow that another person had been killed, instead of him. However, the Poles were not immediately able to send fresh troops to Russia owing to trouble within their own country where malcontents among the Polish gentry had raised an insurrection against the king for attempting to encroach on their liberties. The insurgents were defeated by the king's troops in 1607, when Sigismund III was once more free to turn his attention to Russian affairs. In the autumn of 1607 a new Polish minion, who likewise assumed the name of Tsarevich Dimitry Ivanovich, False Dimitry II, appeared on the frontier of Muscovy. The Poles sent the new False Dimitry large military forces, including contingents of Polish regulars. A relative of the Lithuanian chancellor, Jan Sapieha, brought up a detachment of 7,500 soldiers (infantry and cavalry). Hetman Rozinski came with a detachment of 4,000 men. Detachments of Don and Zaporozhye Cossacks also joined False Dimitry II.

In the spring of 1608 the tsar's troops were defeated in a two-day battle near Bolkhov. False Dimitry II's main forces moved on towards Moscow by way of Kaluga and Mozhaisk. They made an attempt to seize Moscow, but were repulsed. The Poles then set up a fortified camp near the village of Tushino, on the high bank of the Moskva River, not far from the capital. False Dimitry II was named the "Tushino tsar" or the "Thief of Tushino" after the name of the Tushino camp (political criminals in Muscovy were called thieves).

At Tushino False Dimitry II brought his army into fighting trim. Ivan Zarutsky, one of the Polish *szlachta* by descent, took command of the Cossacks. The general command was left in the hands of the Poles.

Moscow's position became very grave. Famine set in in the city. Discontent with the tsar increased. Many boyars and nobles foreseeing the speedy downfall of Vasili Shuiski, went over to the Tushino camp, where False Dimitry II granted them charters to certain estates, and other awards. Some of the nobles changed sides several times, going back and forth between Moscow and Tushino. These people were called *perelyoty* (birds of passage).

Having invested Moscow the Tushino detachments began to spread in various directions from the capital. The Troitsk-Sergiyev Monastery (70 km. from Moscow, now called Zagorsk) behind whose high fortress walls the surrounding peasant population entrenched themselves, heroically resisted the Polish invaders. The monastery's defenders withstood the fierce cannon bombardment and bravely repulsed all attacks of the enemy, inflicting heavy losses upon the Poles during their sallies. But the Tushino troops met with considerable success in the region

of the Upper Volga. The rich cities of the Volga and the north, such as Yaroslavl, Vologda, Kostroma and others, recognized the power of False Dimitry II. Many people really believed they were fighting against the hated tsar of the boyars and for "Tsarevich Dimitry."

**Partisan War Against the Poles.** Slowly people's eyes were opened to the imposture. Poles began to make their appearance in the cities, confiscating the merchants' goods and imposing heavy taxes upon the peasants and craftsmen. In the rural districts Tushino detachments robbed the peasants, took away their corn and hay, killed the inhabitants and burnt their houses and farms. The Polish gentry took Russian cities and estates on "indemnity," that is, they collected revenue from them for their own benefit. The peasants in the countryside, and petty craftsmen, military servitors and tradespeople in the cities began to fight the invaders. Peasant detachments sprang up, commanded by peasants, serfs, or military servitors. They boldly attacked the well-armed Polish troops. By the end of 1608 partisan warfare was rife throughout the country.

Tsar Vasili Shuiski, realizing that he would not be able to cope with the rebels and Poles of Tushino and fearing the peasant disturbances in the country, had recourse to foreign intervention, soliciting the help of the Swedish king, Charles IX. According to the treaty concluded between them, the city of Karela (Kexholm) and its county were ceded to Sweden who, on her part, promised Vasili Shuiski military assistance in driving out the Polish detachments and restoring the tsar's power in the country. Sweden in fact had long been waiting for an opportunity to seize Russian frontier territory and again cut Russia off from the sea. The Swedish king sent a strong body of troops under Jacob Delagardie to Novgorod in the spring of 1609. This force consisted of 15,000 mercenaries—Swedes, Germans, English, Scots, French, and others to which the tsar's nephew, Prince M.V. Skopin-Shuiski attached himself with his Russian soldiers. The Russo-Swedish detachment left Novgorod for Moscow, advancing through Tver, and liberating on the way the towns which had been seized by the Tushino troops.

**Outbreak of War Between Russia and Poland.** The resistance offered the Polish aggressors by the Russian people proved to the Polish *gentry* that the support they were rendering the pretenders was not achieving its goal. Meanwhile, Russia was ruined by the protracted war. Vasili Shuiski's government was tottering. The Polish *szlachta* decided that this was an opportune moment to deal Russia a decisive blow, and extend Polish domains at the expense of her weakened neighbour. Throughout the summer of 1609 Polish detachments attacked Russia's frontier lands and pillaged the Byelorussian peasants. In the autumn a large Polish army under King Sigismund III crossed the frontier and laid siege to Smolensk.

After Poland had commenced open hostilities against Russia, she no longer had any need of False Dimitry II. Sigismund III therefore recalled the Poles who were in the service of False Dimitry II to his own army standing before Smolensk. In the winter of 1609 the Russo-Swedish troops of Skopin-Shuiski and Delagardie, who had marched out from Novgorod were drawing close to Moscow. At their approach the Poles lifted the siege of the Troitsk-Sergiyev Monastery. Early in January 1610 False Dimitry II, deprived of Poland's support, fled from Tushino to Kaluga, followed by some of the Poles, who still hoped to take Moscow with his help. The Russian boyars and nobles in the service of False Dimitry II decided to come to terms with the Polish king. They agreed to recognize the Polish Prince Wladislaus as the tsar of Muscovy, and on February 4, 1610, concluded a corresponding agreement with Sigismund III. Sigismund, on behalf of his son Wladislaus, promised not to change the state system of Muscovy, to maintain the power of the nobles and their landed property, and to return the fugitive peasants to them. The Tushino camp broke up completely. In March 1610 Skopin-Shuiski and the Russo-Swedish troops entered Moscow. Skopin-Shuiski died suddenly soon afterwards. Both Shuiski and the Tushino boyars had resorted to foreign intervention because they feared the Russian people and had no faith in its powers.

Smolensk, besieged by the Poles, defended itself stubbornly. While continuing his siege of Smolensk, the Polish king decided to send an army under the Polish hetman Zolkiewski to take Moscow. The tsar sent an army, under the command of his brother, Dimitry Shuiski, against Zolkiewski. Both armies met near the village of Klushino in June 1610. During the battle the German and Swedish mercenaries betrayed the Russians and went over to the Poles. The tsar's troops were defeated and the way to Moscow was open. The Poles granted the Swedes who had joined them a free departure. The latter went on to Novgorod region where they began preparations for the seizure of Novgorod.

In July 1610 the starving population of Moscow rose up against Vasili Shuiski. At that time False Dimitry II once more approached Moscow from Kaluga. The boyars and nobility seized Vasili Shuiski and forced him to take the monastic vow, thus ensuring his seclusion from all temporal concerns.

A boyars' government was formed in Moscow, consisting of seven of the great boyars, mostly of ancient ducal lineage. This government was known as the *semiboyarshchina* (the Seven Boyars). Actually, however, it was the rule of the Poles that was established in Muscovy.

**Seizure of Moscow by the Poles and of Novgorod Region by the Swedes.** Fearing a popular uprising and the seizure of the capital by False Dimitry II's Cossacks, the boyars' government hastened

to come to terms with Zolkiewski. It agreed to recognize Wladislaus as the tsar of Muscovy, on the condition that he rule jointly with the boyars. After concluding this agreement the boyars' government treacherously admitted the Polish troops into Moscow. A large deputation, which included the metropolitan Philaret, was sent to Sigismund III, outside the walls of Smolensk, to conclude peace. The Poles seized the Moscow envoys and sent them off to Poland. The nobles who were members of the deputation sent epistles to Moscow in which they described their humiliating position; they called upon the Russians not to submit to the king and his son, the prince. "Take good counsel among yourselves concerning this," they wrote, "and send our epistle to Novgorod and to Vologda and to Nizhni (Nizhni Novgorod), that it may be known to all." The Polish king's ambition was to become the tsar of Muscovy himself.

The Moscow boyars' government found itself in a most humiliating position. The boyars had to render complete obedience to the new chief of the Polish detachment. Several of the boyars who attempted resistance were immediately arrested and placed under the surveillance of Polish commissaries. The Polish *gentry* robbed the tsar's treasury in the Kremlin of its valuables. They plundered the population of the capital and committed outrages. The situation in other cities was no better. A large Polish army headed by the king continued to besiege Smolensk. The Swedes seized the Russian southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, and threatened Novgorod. Trade between the towns practically ceased. The craftsmen and petty tradesfolk were impoverished. The nobility too were ruined since they had no one to work their land. Entire regions were desolated. The Russian state broke up into separate parts. But the Russian people, even in this difficult period, did not submit to the invaders or lay down their arms.

## 49. STRUGGLE OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE AGAINST THE POLISH INVADERS

**The First Popular Levy.** The Poles in Moscow tried their utmost to make the population of the capital declare their allegiance to the Polish king. The people, however, did not want to submit either to the king or to his son, the prince, nor to any other Polish authorities. Proclamations were circulated among the population, branding as traitors those Moscow boyars who had struck a bargain with the Poles. The head of the Russian church, the patriarch Hermogen, also came out against the Poles. At the end of the year 1610 he sent out proclamations to the cities, invoking the Russian people to rally to the capital's liberation.

The appeals of the patriarch Hermogen inflamed the popular movement against the invaders still more. On learning of these proc-

lamations, the Poles threw Hermogen into a dungeon, but were unable to break his will.

In January 1611 the Ryazan waywode, Prokopi Lyapunov, began to organize a volunteer force for the liberation of Moscow. The basis of this popular levy was formed by detachments of nobles, chiefly from the southern districts. Lyapunov appealed to the Cossacks and serfs, promising the Cossacks remuneration and the serfs emancipation. The Cossacks who had formerly been in the Tushino camp likewise responded to this call. Various cities sent out proclamations inviting each other to join forces for effecting the liberation of Moscow. When the Poles learned of the rallying of a Russian popular levy they tried to make the people of the capital fortify the city. But far from helping the Poles the Russians hurled down the cannon which had already been set up on the walls. The Polish *szlachta* fell upon the populace and started a slaughter. The population put up a furious resistance. A detachment, commanded by Prince Dimitry Mikhailovich Pozharski, began to press the Poles. The vanguard of the popular levy came up at an opportune moment. The Poles and the boyar traitors then set fire to Moscow. The battle continued among the burning buildings, but the smoke and flames forced the Russian detachments back to the outskirts of the capital. Prince Pozharski was wounded during the fighting. Several days later, in the middle of March, the main forces of the popular levy arrived upon the scene. They stood outside Moscow for some months, but were unable to liberate it.

On June 30 a covenant was drawn up defining the form of government and organization of the army. The popular levy, consisting of nobles and Cossacks was placed in the charge of three "chiefs": Lyapunov, as representative of the nobles, and Prince Dimitry Trubetskoi and the Cossack ataman Ivan Zarutsky—leaders of the Cossack detachments which had formerly been in Tushino camp. The nobles were mostly concerned with ensuring land and peasants for themselves. The covenant provided that serf peasants who had quitted their landlords during the peasant war were to be returned to their original domiciles. Drawn up in the interests of the nobles, the covenant of June 30th aggravated factional strife within the popular levy. Collisions between the nobles and the Cossacks were a constant occurrence. The Cossacks slew Prokopi Lyapunov. After his death the popular levy fell to pieces. The detachments of nobles dispersed. Only a part of the Cossack troops, under Trubetskoi and Zarutsky, remained before Moscow.

For nearly two years the valiant garrison of Smolensk repulsed the furious onslaughts of a large Polish army. Neither the fierce bombardment, disease and lack of food, nor the alluring promises made by the king could break the resistance of the besieged. To all proposals of surrender the Smolensk people retorted that they were deter-

mined to fight to the death. In the beginning of June 1611 the Poles succeeded in blowing up part of the fortress wall. The last ferocious battle was fought out in the streets of the burning city. The inhabitants put up a desperate fight. Many of them rushed into the flames rather than fall into the hands of the enemy. A powder magazine containing about two and a half tons of gunpowder was blown up. Many Poles and Russians perished under the debris of falling buildings during the explosion. Only a mere handful of the defenders were taken prisoner. At about the same time the Swedes captured Great Novgorod.

The stubborn defence of Smolensk was of signal value in that it kept the main forces of the Polish army tied up under the walls of that fortress, and facilitated the struggle of the Russian people for the liberation of their native land.

**The Popular Levy of Minin and Pozharski.** The first popular levy, which consisted chiefly of the nobility and Cossack units, broke up by the autumn of 1611. But the struggle of the Russian people against the Polish invaders continued with unabated vigour. Kuzma Minin of Nizhni Novgorod, elected by the townsfolk as the reeve of Nizhni Novgorod, took the lead in organizing a new people's army. He made an ardent appeal to the population to rally in defence of their country, and to spare neither life nor property in its liberation. The people of Nizhni Novgorod drew up a covenant by which they pledged obedience to their chiefs, undertook to provide funds for the army's maintenance and not to spare themselves. On Minin's proposal, Prince Dimitry Pozharski, famed for his battle against the Poles at Moscow, where he had been wounded, was invited to take command of the people's army.

From Nizhni Novgorod, as at one time from Moscow, proclamations were sent to other cities calling upon the people to join the struggle for the liberation of their native land, and to send men, arms, and money. The whole country, from the Maritime North to Ryazan, rose up in arms. The Poles in Moscow were alarmed by the news of the mustering of a large popular army. Their boyar satellites, scared of the popular levy, tried to persuade the people to submit to the Polish Prince Wladislaus. But these appeals of the boyars met with no response.



Sabre awarded to D M Pozharski for the liberation of Moscow *Historical Museum (Moscow)*

Early in the spring of 1612 the popular levy moved from Nizhni Novgorod to Yaroslavl. Its progress was greeted enthusiastically by the people, the city folk made generous donations in money, and ever new detachments of warriors swelled its ranks from all sides. The popular levy stood about four months at Yaroslavl. Here it organized a *zemski* (national) government, a "Government of the Entire Land." Various government offices were set up for purposes of state administration. Minin and Pozharski, the leaders of the popular levy, devoted considerable time and energy to the organization of the military forces. The popular levy was made up of many heterogeneous units, including nobles from various cities, a miscellaneous urban population, Streltsi, Cossacks, and peasants. Besides Russians the levy comprised Tatars, Mari, Chuvashes, and other nationalities. While the main forces of the popular levy were stationed at Yaroslavl, detachments sent out in various directions had, with the help of the population, liberated a large part of the country from the Poles and also from the Cossacks who had formerly gone over to the side of False Dimitry II and now refused to recognize the national government.

The population in various parts of the country continued of their own accord to fight the Polish detachments. Unfamiliar as they were with the locality, the Poles forced the villagers to act as their guides. However, many of these guides, at the sacrifice of their own lives, led the Polish detachments into forest jungles or decoyed them into the snare of the Russian troops. One of these national heroes was Ivan Susanin, a Kostroma peasant whom the Poles took as their guide. He led the Polish detachment into the Isupovskoye swamp. The infuriated *szlachta* slew Susanin, but they perished in the swamp themselves.

At the end of August 1612 the main forces of the popular levy marched to the walls of Moscow. Ataman Zarutsky, who had again joined the Poles, fled with some of his Cossacks to the south. The remaining Cossacks, encamped before Moscow with Prince Trubetskoi, though they did not immediately join the popular levy, put no obstacles in its way. While the popular levy was marching on Moscow, Hetman Chodkiewicz, at the head of a Polish army, was hastening to the aid of the Poles with arms and food. In numerical strength his army was not inferior to that of Minin and Pozharski. Chodkiewicz fell upon the popular levy full tilt, supported by sallies from the Poles seated in Moscow. The popular levy found itself hard pressed. All day a furious battle raged. The men of the popular levy dismounted from their horses and closed in with the enemy. Some of Trubetskoi's Cossacks joined the volunteers without waiting for his permission, and together they threw back the Poles. The latter renewed their attack on the following day. They strove to break through to the ferries on the Moskva River. Kuzma Minin with a troop of four hundred of

Pozharski's men, crossed the river, and came down precipitately on the Poles' flank. The Poles wavered before the shock of this sudden impact, then turned and fled to their camp. Their entire baggage train (400 carts with supplies) fell into the hands of the victors. The remnants of the Polish troops took to their heels. The Polish garrison in Moscow was left without reinforcements and food, the Poles began to suffer from hunger. On October 26, 1612, after a battle at the Kremlin Gates, they surrendered. Moscow was freed.

## *Chapter XV*

# AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

### 50 REIGN OF MIKHAIL ROMANOV

**Election of Mikhail Romanov as Tsar.** After Moscow was liberated the "National Government" convened the *Zemski Sobor* (National Assembly) for the purpose of electing a tsar.

The assembly consisted chiefly of nobles and burghers, the boyars and clergy forming a small group. There were also many representatives of the Cossacks, chiefly the Cossack atamans. Among the boyars were followers of the Polish Crown Prince Wladislaus and the Swedish Crown Prince Gustavus. The bulk of the assembly, however, were opposed to the interventionists. It was therefore resolved not to elect a foreigner to the throne. The most popular of the boyars, well regarded among the nobles and the Cossack atamans, were the Romanovs, relatives of Tsar Ivan IV and Fyodor. From them the nobles and the Cossack atamans hoped to obtain land, peasants, and other favours. Philaret, the metropolitan of Rostov, the oldest representative of this family, was a prisoner in Poland, and, moreover, being a monk, was not eligible as tsar. The *Zemski Sobor* therefore elected as tsar his sixteen-year-old son Mikhail, though he was a mere youth of weak character and inferior intellect. The elections were held at the beginning of 1613. The boyars are said to have made Mikhail give them a written pledge that he would act only with their consent. The new tsar was too young and unwise to rule independently. The country was virtually governed by his mother and relatives. There were still traitors among the ruling boyars such as Prince Fyodor Mstislavski. It was they who dismissed the "National Government" of Minin and Pozharski from power.

The new government did not immediately succeed in establishing a firm footing in the country. Zarutsky and Marina Mniszek, accom-

panied by some of the Cossacks, fled to Astrakhan where the former proclaimed himself Tsar Dimitry, and Marina's little son the Tsarevich Ivan Dimitrievich. The mass of the Cossacks did not support Zarutsky, and the residents of Astrakhan even started an uprising against him. Zarutsky then went to the Yaik, but there the Cossacks seized both him and Marina and handed them over to the Moscow authorities. Zarutsky was executed in Moscow. Marina died in prison, her young son was hanged.

The landlords took advantage of the restoration of a central government to crush the peasant movement completely and re-establish their own power over the serf countryside.

The government made generous awards of land and serfs to the atamans and other wealthy Cossacks. In this manner the upper strata of the Cossacks were turned into landed proprietors. The poor element of the Cossacks was dealt with peremptorily. The tsar's waywodes rounded up and annihilated the Cossack detachments everywhere. In 1616 a rather powerful movement broke out among the peasants and serfs in the Nizhni Novgorod district. The insurgents killed the nobles and burnt the villages. The same year saw an outbreak among the Tatars and the Mari in the Kazan district. They came close to the cities and tried to join forces with the rebels in the Nizhni Novgorod district. The uprising was suppressed.

The insurrection quelled, the victorious landlords set about tightening the shackles of thralldom. Under pressure from the nobles and the monasteries the government issued a number of ukases lengthening the period of search for fugitive peasants from five to fifteen years, and thus paving the way to the complete abolition of the fixity of term that had heretofore existed. The war against the peasantry retarded the struggle against foreign intervention.

The Swedes who had seized Novgorod continued their military operations. The Swedish king, the famous general Gustavus Adolphus, was defeated at Pskov in 1615. This presented an opportunity for beginning peace negotiations with Sweden through the mediation of England and Holland. These countries were incurring losses as a result of falling trade with Russia due to hostilities. In the beginning of 1617 peace was concluded at Stolbovo. The Swedes retained the entire shoreline of the Gulf of Finland and the Russian cities of Oreshek, Ivan-gorod, Yam and others, but evacuated the Novgorod region. Once more Russia found herself cut off from the Baltic Sea.

The war against Poland continued. Wladislaus was not disposed to give up the Muscovy throne. He marched on Moscow in 1618, but the assault of the Polish troops was repulsed. On his retreat from Moscow Wladislaus approached the Troitsk-Sergiyev Monastery and demanded its surrender. The monastery walls opened cannon fire on the Polish army and forced it to withdraw.

At the end of 1618 Moscow and Polish plenipotentiaries concluded an armistice for $14^1/_2$ years in the village of Deulino (near the Troitsk-Sergiyev Monastery). Smolensk and its adjoining territory, and Seversk (Chernigov) Land were temporarily ceded to Poland

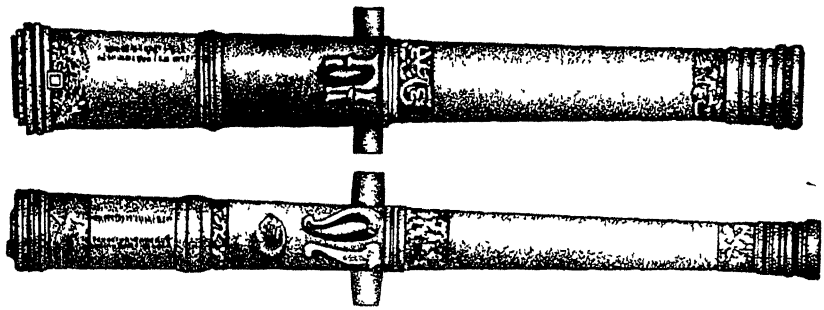
**Restoration of the State.** The long war and intervention had reduced the country to a state of ruin. In the early years of Mikhail's reign the *Zemski Sobor*, which functioned uninterruptedly, rendered the government considerable assistance in restoring the state administration. All the current needs of the state were discussed at these assemblies, new taxes were imposed, etc. Widespread ruin and desolation made it difficult to collect taxes from the population. The *Zemski Sobor* sent its representatives to the provinces to help the royal tax collectors. After the conclusion of the armistice with Poland the tsar's father, Philaret Romanov, returned from his Polish captivity. On his arrival in Moscow he was immediately made the patriarch and became the virtual ruler of the state (1619-1633). All ukases were issued in the name of the tsar and his father. Philaret even accepted the title of *Veliki Gosudar*—the Great Lord. He virtually combined in his person the ecclesiastic and secular power—the power of the patriarch and of the tsar. This greatly strengthened the central government.

## 51. FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE PEASANT WAR

**War with Poland for Smolensk.** Russia could not reconcile herself with the loss of Smolensk, a first-class fortress that protected the crossing over the Dnieper and was of great commercial significance. The Muscovy government, therefore, throughout the period of the Deulino armistice, made active preparations for a new war.

Events of the early 17th century strikingly revealed the technical backwardness of the Russian state. The government of Tsar Mikhail made urgent efforts to build up the military strength and improve the organization of the Russian army. Despite all difficulties a large quantity of arms was purchased abroad. New regiments were formed of foreign mercenaries, and peasant recruits from the monastery and landlord demesnes and volunteers were used to form Russian regiments of "foreign formation," trained according to European methods under the command of foreign officers.

In 1632 the army of Muscovy under the boyar Shein began its siege of Smolensk. Shein had already won glory in 1610-1611 during the heroic defence of Smolensk. At this time Sigismund III of Poland died. A new king had not been elected and the country was in the throes of intestine strife. Smolensk was strongly fortified and the siege



Firearms of the 16th-17th centuries *Oruzheinaya Palata*. Above. 52-pound harquebus "Troil" Below· 38-pound harquebus "Medved," 1590

became a protracted one. Discipline among the foreign soldiers in Muscovy's service was very lax. They constantly bickered among themselves and frequently went over to the enemy.

The Poles succeeded in persuading the Crimean Tatars by gifts and bribes to commence hostilities against Muscovy. The Tatars raided the southern border regions of Russia On receiving news of the Tatar raid, the nobles of the southern districts abandoned the army and hastened to defend their estates.

In 1633 the patriarch Philaret died. The Moscow boyars did not want war and did not supply Shein with reinforcements. Demoralization set in in the Russian army. Shein himself openly voiced his doubts as to the possibility of victory and, very likely, missed the opportunity of capturing the fortress. The son of Sigismund III, Wladislaus IV, who was elected king of Poland, hastened with an army to the aid of the besieged Polish garrison. The Russians were trapped between Wladislaus' troops and the Smolensk fortifications. After several attempts to break through, the Russians were forced to surrender on onerous terms—all their cannon were handed over to the enemy.

The Moscow boyars, who did not like Shein for his haughtiness, made this failure an excuse for charging him with treachery. Shein was executed, although it was the boyars, and not he, who were the traitors. Further progress of the Poles was stemmed at the fortress of Belaya. On being demanded to surrender, the small garrison holding the fortress declared that it would defend itself to the last man. The threat of war with Turkey and the resistance encountered at Belaya compelled King Wladislaus to seek a speedy peace, which was concluded at the frontier river of Polyanovka in 1634. Poland kept Smolensk and the other cities seized during the intervention, but agreed to

recognize Mikhail as the Russian tsar. Wladislaus renounced his claim to the tsar's throne for all time.

**Relations with the Crimea and Turkey.** One of the reasons for the failure of the Russian troops at Smolensk was the attacks of the Crimean Tatars on the southern districts. After the termination of the war the Moscow government energetically began to repair and build a line of fortifications to protect the southern frontier against the Tatar raids. These fortifications ensured Muscovy's possession of the fertile steppe, which Russian landowners had begun to lay hands on.

In 1637 the Don Cossacks attacked the Fortress of Azov, held by the Turks, which barred the exit from the Don to the Azov Sea. After a siege lasting two months the Cossacks took Azov by storm.

In 1641 the Turkish sultan sent a large army with a powerful artillery to Azov. The small Cossack detachment located in Azov courageously repulsed twenty-four assaults and forced the Turks to raise the siege. In expectation of new attacks being undertaken by the Turks, the Cossacks appealed to Moscow for help.

The government of Tsar Mikhail hesitated to begin war with Turkey for the possession of Azov without first obtaining the support of the *Zemski Sobor*. When the National Assembly convened in 1642 the military and merchants, though in favour of having Azov brought under the tsar's power, bitterly complained about the burden of taxation, the bribery rampant among the government clerks, the tyranny of the waywodes and other irregularities in the state administration. Seeing that it could not safely rely on the active support of the ruling classes, the government ordered the Cossacks to abandon Azov.

## 52. FEUDAL SERF ECONOMY

**The Condition of the Peasants.** In the 17th century, as in the preceding centuries of feudalism, the land of every feudal demesne was divided into the lord's land and the peasants'. The peasants tilled not only their own plots with their own implements but also the land of their lords, who alone enjoyed its harvest. As Lenin pointed out, in order that this system of economy, which was called *barshchina* economy, might exist, the following conditions were necessary: "Firstly, the predominance of natural self-sufficing economy. The serfowner's estate had to represent a self-contained, isolated whole, having very weak contacts with the outside world."* Secondly, such an economy demands that the peasant be consigned to a piece of land and attached to it so that he cannot leave the landlord. The third condition is the personal dependence of the peasant on the landlord: "If the landlord

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Eng ed., Moscow, 1934, Vol I, p. 243.



Farm work. Symposium.
*"Balm for the Soul,"*
*17th century*

did not exercise direct power over the person of the peasant, he could not compel him, as possessor of land and a tiller on his own account, to work for him."* The fourth condition which was also a result of *barshchina* economy is "the extremely low and routine state of technique, for the land was tilled by small peasants who were crushed by poverty and degraded by personal dependence and ignorance."**

In the 17th century the rural population of Russia was divided up into several categories. privately-owned peasants living on the lands of the clergy, boyars and landlords, peasants adscribed to the tsar's palace who supplied products for his needs, called *dvortsoviye* (palace peasants); and finally all the other peasants who lived on crown lands, called *chorniye* or *chernososhniye* (the "black" people or the rabble). All the peasants were heavily taxed by the tsar.

In the 17th century the number of privately-owned peasants continued to grow. The government of the first tsars of the Romanov dynasty granted large estates together with *chernososhniye* and *dvortsoviye* peasants, to the palatine aristocracy and nobles. Large demesnes together with the peasants and craftsmen living on them were seized by the relatives of the tsar. By the end of the 17th century the difference between the estates held in fee and the patrimonies practically vanished; most of the estates became of hereditary tenure, like the patrimonies.

The condition of the privately-owned peasants was particularly onerous. The landlords kept on increasing the manorial tillage which the peasants were obliged to work. The latter paid the landowner quitrent in kind, consisting of various products of agriculture and the domestic crafts. The products obtained from the peasants went to feed the family of the landlord and his servants. The peasants had to pay their landlord, in addition to the products of their land, a

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* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Eng ed., Moscow, 1934, Vol. I, pp. 243-244.
** *Ibid.*, p 244.

money tax generally varying from fifty kopeks to one ruble for every peasant household.

With the onset of autumn and the winding up of farm work, many peasants usually engaged in various crafts: they wove linen cloth, fulled wool, curried hides, made mittens and wooden utensils, forged agricultural implements, etc. Part of these articles remained in the peasant household or was given to the landlord in payment of quitrent. The rest was sold on the market. In order to raise money to pay the crown taxes and their quitrent to the landlords, the peasants became increasingly dependent upon the market.



Shoeshop in Moscow in the 17th century. *According to Oelschläger (Olearius)*

The development of peasant trade led to social division among the peasantry. Peasant factors appeared in the villages. Some of them abandoned husbandry and became merchants.

The landlords in the 17th century were no longer content with the products which they received from their peasants, serfs and craftsmen. The rich boyars and the nobles of the capital made themselves clothes of Italian velvet or English woolens, wore sable hats, were fond of expensive ornaments, drank imported wines and introduced foreign articles into their households. All these things could be obtained only for money received from the peasants or from the sale of the products of the peasant economy.

Serf economy in the 17th century began to adapt itself to the developing market.

An example of a large serf economy in the middle of the 17th century was that of the boyar Boris Ivanovich Morozov. Morozov had about three hundred villages with a population of over 40,000 serfs on his extensive demesnes, which yielded him a revenue, in money alone, of 10,000 rubles annually (equivalent to 170,000 rubles at early 20th century parity). His numerous granaries contained hundreds of thousands of poods* of corn During the war with Poland Morozov

* A pood is equal to 36 lbs. —*Trans.*

took advantage of prevailing high prices on corn to amass a huge fortune. His serfs had to supply huge quantities of various products for the upkeep of the 700 servants on his estate. Morozov established ironworks and potash factories and compelled his peasants to do the most difficult work. The potash was sold to foreign merchants.

**Manufactories.** Side by side with the growth of handicraft production, the first manufactories made their appearance in Russia in the 17th century. In manufactories a number of people worked together, depending upon the size of the enterprise They performed different parts of a common job. Work in the manufactory was performed by hand with the aid of simple instruments (the term "manufactory" comes from the Latin words *manus* meaning *hand*, and *factura* meaning *a making*). Compared with the labour of the artisan, the manufactory permitted greater productivity of labour. In 1632 a Dutch merchant, Andrew Vinnius, was granted a concession on the iron ore near Tula; there he built the first iron manufactory, thus laying the foundation for the future Tula Ironworks. A few years later a Swede by the name of Koet founded a glass factory near Moscow. During the second half of the 17th century the crown, merchants and landowners organized ironworks, copper foundries, glass works, paper mills and tanneries. For the most part, the workers in these manufactories were drawn at that time from among the serfs or other dependent people The manufactories also employed free hired "workpeople" from the ranks of the city poor.

**The Crafts and Trade.** In the 17th century regular trade intercourse was established between the village and town marts. In some places the city and village population had begun to specialize in the manufacture of one or another article. The black-earth districts supplied the central regions of the country with their corn. Yaroslavl was renowned for its mirrors, which were shipped even to Siberia. Vologda produced various ironware. Kaluga was famous for its fine work in wood, and so on. In the southern cities one could meet merchants from the Maritime North; in the northern cities various tradesmen collected who had bought goods for shipment to Archangel, Siberia and other places. Thus regions and cities ceased to be economically isolated as they had been before.

In the 17th century, as Lenin points out, small marts merged into a single "all-Russian market."* With the development of trade between regions, there was brought about a virtual amalgamation of all the territories that had formerly been part of separate principalities. The old local peculiarities vanished everywhere.

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* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1935, Vol. I, p 73.



Port of Archangel in the 17th century. *Dutch engraving of the 17th century*

Through her commerce Russia in the 17th century established still closer ties with many foreign powers. Archangel became the chief port of trade with Western Europe. Every summer large numbers of English, Dutch and German ships arrived at the port of Archangel, bringing miscellaneous cargoes of woolens, silk fabrics, expensive utensils, arms, metals, etc. Russian merchants navigated the Northern Dvina with shiploads of Siberian furs, hides, hemp, flax, pitch, potash, pork, and the wares of peasants and city craftsmen. Trade with the East was carried on chiefly via Astrakhan, to which Bokhara and Persian merchants brought their Eastern wares.

**Towns.** The development of the crafts and trade stimulated the growth of towns. In the 16th-17th centuries the Russian town consisted of several sections. The central part of the town, the Kremlin (or citadel), was usually surrounded by wooden walls; some big towns had stone walls about them, with battlements and towers. The administrative offices were housed within the fortress where the supplies of food and gunpowder were also kept, as well as special *isbas* (huts) for sheltering the population in times of a siege. Adjoining the citadel were settlements of craftsmen and petty tradespeople. Beyond these settlements, amid the fields and meadows, were scattered villages belonging to the monasteries and boyars.

The growth of domestic and foreign trade promoted the development of a merchant class. The upper stratum of merchants in the capital who enjoyed great privileges were called *gosti*—"guests." This title was conferred by special royal charter. The Russian merchants had to compete with foreign merchants (the English, Dutch, Germans, and others) who tried to gain control over the Russian market. The

Russian merchants succeeded in getting the government to prohibit duty-free trade by foreigners in Russia.

The townsfolk were divided into several categories, according to their financial status. The wealthy merchants formed the highest category. Craftsmen and petty tradesmen as well as people who made their living by casual employment constituted the lower strata. Taxes were imposed on the townsfolk in money and in services. This assessment did not apply to people living on the lands of the church, boyars and nobles. The wealthy city taxpayers, the "best people" as they were called, held elective offices and tried to reduce their assessment. The condition of the lower estates in the towns, on whose shoulders rested the main burden of state taxation and who were virtually in thrall to the rich merchants, was a pitiful one.

## 53. UPRISINGS IN THE CITIES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 17TH CENTURY

**Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich.** After the death of Tsar Mikhail, his son, the sixteen-year-old Alexei Mikhailovich (1645-1676), ascended the throne of Muscovy. The young tsar was very fond of falconry and other sports. His guardian, the boyar Boris Ivanovich Morozov, assumed the administration of the state. He appointed his own people to the most important posts. To strengthen his influence, he procured the marriage of the tsar with the daughter of Miloslavski, a boyar of humble origin, himself marrying another of his daughters.

At the time of Tsar Mikhail's death the situation in the country was very grave. The unsuccessful war with Poland had completely ruined the country, which had not yet recovered from the effects of intervention. The first thing Morozov did was to improve the country's financial position. For the sake of economy he reduced the salaries of the military, and imposed a new and very high tax on salt. Thousands of poods of fish rotted because of the high price of salt, and the government was obliged to hastily repeal the salt tax. Other taxes were introduced, the burden of which fell on the poor part of the population, especially on the city craftsmen, unskilled labourers and petty tradespeople.

The rich merchants (guests) to whom the farming of taxes was entrusted, enriched themselves at the expense of the poor. The tradespeople from among the peasants, being the serfs of the boyars and the church, were exempt from taxation, though many of them carried on very big transactions. There were large settlements near the towns belonging to the boyars and monasteries the entire population of which engaged in trade and the crafts, and competed effectively with the townsfolk, without, however, having to pay taxes.

**Insurrections in the Cities.** The plight of the lower strata of the urban population led to a number of uprisings and disturbances during the first years of Alexei Mikhailovich's reign. On June 1, 1648, when the tsar returned to Moscow from a religious pilgrimage, the populace who went out to meet him lodged complaints against the extortions of Morozov's people. The petitioners were dispersed with whips. The next day a crowd broke into the Kremlin and made its way to the palace, demanding that Leonti Pleshcheyev, who was in charge of the police in the capital, be turned over to them. Pleshcheyev had a reputation among the people of being a savage oppressor and a brute. The boyars who came out of the palace to pacify the crowd were forced to flee. The people attacked the homes of the boyars and officials. An important functionary was killed. The insurrection assumed threatening dimensions. Fires broke out over a large section of the city. The terrified tsar handed over to the throng the most hated of the grandees—Pleshcheyev and Trakhaniotov. These were killed. Then the rebels demanded the head of Morozov himself. The tsar sent his boyars to the Red Square,* who, in the name of the tsar, swore that Morozov would be dismissed from the government. During the night he was taken out of Moscow and sent to a distant monastery.

The uprising became all the more menacing when the nobles, who had arrived in the city to take up service, also took advantage of the situation. The townsfolk and nobles submitted a petition to the tsar asking him to convene the *Zemski Sobor* in order to draw up a new code of laws (*Ulozheniye*).

Simultaneously with the uprising in Moscow, disturbances broke out in a number of other cities: Kursk, Solvychegodsk, Ustyug, and others. In the autumn of 1648 the government hurriedly convened the *Zemski Sobor*. The assembly was well attended. The great majority consisted of the provincial nobility and townsfolk. All their demands were met. In January 1649 a new Code of Laws was confirmed, fixing the duties and rights of the various social estates, the conditions of the nobles' service and the assessment of the townsfolk. To conciliate the nobles on the much vexed question of repealing the "fixed period" that is, the term during which fugitive peasants could be sought, this issue was finally settled in the landlords' favour, thus making serfdom a statutory established fact. According to the new legal code, fugitive peasants, in the event of their being caught, were reinstated together with their families and property to their former owners, irrespective of the time that had elapsed. Thus the feudal dependence of the peasants was legally established as the law of serfdom. The townsfolk secured a decision by which all boyar and church

* Originally meaning "Beautiful Square" since the Russian word "Red" is synonymous with "Beautiful"

settlements were annexed to the towns, and their population placed on an equal footing with those of the towns in regard to taxation and services. The townspeople themselves were completely attached to the settlements in which they lived. At the same time the code consolidated the tsar's power by establishing a death penalty for crimes against the tsar's person and harsh punishments for an insult to the tsar.

The movement which had spread throughout the cities of Russia during the summer of 1648 did not subside immediately. In 1650 a very strong outbreak occurred in Novgorod and Pskov, in response, as it were, to the Code of Laws of 1649.

The uprising in Pskov was especially serious. The Pskov people deposed the tsar's waywode and set up a self-government. They sent a petition to Moscow in which, among other things, they demanded that their own representatives be permitted to sit in the waywode's court of justice. In reply they received from Moscow a letter of reprimand. "Never has it happened that muzhiks have sat in court together with boyars and waywodes, nor will it ever be." At the same time troops were dispatched against Pskov.

The people of Pskov defended themselves bravely for almost three months, and inflicted heavy losses upon the tsar's troops. In the Pskov district the insurgent peasants assaulted the landlords. The uprising assumed such serious proportions that the tsar again convened the *Zemski Sobor* in Moscow. The assembly sent a delegation to Pskov with the promise of an amnesty. There was no complete unity in Pskov. The rich people persuaded the populace to cease their resistance and give their allegiance to the tsar. In expectation of the amnesty the Pskov people obeyed, but they were cruelly deceived. When the disturbance was over, executions and exiles began. The rich Pskov people themselves helped the tsarist administration and betrayed the ringleaders.

The future patriarch Nikon especially distinguished himself in quelling the disturbances of 1650.

## 54. ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN STATE

**The Power of the Tsar.** The state structure of Russia as a system of feudal serfdom took final form in the 17th century under the Romanovs. Lenin describes this feudal state in the following way: "In order to maintain his domination, in order to retain his power, the landlord had to have an apparatus which would unite, under his rule, a tremendous number of people and would subordinate them to certain laws and regulations—and all these laws essentially boiled down to one—the

retention of power by the landlord over the serf."* At the head of the Russian state was an autocratic tsar who was himself the first and foremost landlord of the realm. The nobles had need of a strong tsar, who could protect their class interests. The will of the tsar was law for the entire land. All military servitors, even the aristocratic boyars, called themselves the servants of the tsar; and assessed people—the townsfolk and peasants—could not even call themselves that. They were the tsar's "little orphans." When addressing the tsar, everyone had to refer to himself in the diminutive· *Petrushka, Ivashka* (Petekin, Johnny). They did obeisance to the tsar as to a deity, touching the ground with their foreheads.

The tsar's power was also sustained by the splendour with which he surrounded himself. On ceremonious occasions, when receiving foreign ambassadors or attending church, the tsar appeared in sumptuous "full-dress," in a brocaded kaftan embroidered in pearls, the royal shoulder-mantle richly ornamented with images of the saints, the Monomakh cap, and a sceptre in his hands.

**The Boyar Duma.** To decide important matters the tsar had a council consisting of his court boyars, which was called the "boyar duma." The tsar, however, was not obliged to consult the boyar duma. More often than not he would confer with several of his trusted servants or make a decision without consulting anyone. The boyar duma was an aristocratic institution, and only people of "noble pedigree" were appointed to it. However, in the 17th century people of relatively obscure origin became members of the boyar duma more and more frequently.

**Government Offices.** Current administration was handled by special institutions, called *prikazi*, at the head of which stood a boyar, assisted by one or two clerks called *dyaki*. The office routine was carried on by under-clerks called *podyachiye*. The clerks and under-clerks were people of humble origin, who lived on the royal salary, on fees from petitioners, and often on bribes (gifts) which were banned by law. They were the obedient tools of the royal power and the executives of centralized government. There were over forty of these offices. The work was divided among them without organization or system. Military affairs were handled by several offices at once. The *Razryadni Prikaz* (Military Office) discharged the functions of the Chief Staff, the *Streletski* Office dealt with the affairs of the Streltsi troops; the Foreign Office took care of foreigners in the service of Muscovy, the *Reiter* Office was in charge of *reiter* regiments (the cavalry, trained on foreign lines and armed with sabres and muskets); the Gunnery Office had charge of the manufacture and storage of arms. The distribution of estates to the nobles was taken care of in the Estate Office There were offices which administered separate and, at times very extensive, regions, such as,

* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed , Moscow, 1935, Vol XXIV, p 372

the Siberia Office, the Malorossia (Little Russia or Ukraine) Office There was no definite system in handling the affairs of the various *prikazi*, a fact which greatly hampered the work of administration. Even the best organized office, the *Posolski Prikaz*, which dealt with foreign affairs, not only had charge of diplomatic matters but also collected taxes from the towns under its jurisdiction.

Every government office dispensed justice and imposed penalties. Legal procedure in those days was a cruel affair. The defendants were subjected to painful tortures. For minor offenses the guilty person was stretched out on the ground and beaten with a rod. For more serious offenses he was "unmercifully" scourged with a whip on his bare backs. The cutting out of tongues, hacking off of hands, and death sentences were common practices. Offenders against religion were burned alive.

By means such as these was the power of the tsar and the feudal lords maintained. Such cruel punishments were characteristic of medieval justice in the 16th and 17th centuries everywhere, including the countries of Western Europe.

**Local Administration.** Waywodes from among the boyars and nobles were sent to govern the cities. The waywode was in command of the city garrison, he administered justice, and collected taxes from the residents of the city and the adjacent district. The elected *starosti* (reeves) became the subordinate agents of the waywodes. The gubernia (regional) reeves still existed, but only as assistants of the waywodes In this way all branches of the administration were concentrated in the hands of the waywodes, a circumstance which provided wide opportunities for abuse. The waywodes regarded their posts merely as a means of private upkeep.

**The Army.** The old cavalry of the nobility gradually lost its former military significance. In peacetime the nobles were busy with their estates. Only at rare intervals did they pass under review for military preparedness. In case of war they had to appear for service "mounted, manned and armed." They were variously armed, sometimes with firearms and sometimes with bows and arrows. Discipline among the nobles' levy was lax. Many of them evaded service on various pretexts. For absence during inspection the offenders were beaten with rods and sometimes deprived of their estates. In view of the weakness of the nobles' levy a body of *Streltsi* was organized in the 16th century. The *Streltsi* received pay in money, were equipped with firearms (arquebuses), and went to war in proper "battle array." But even the *Streltsi* were not really regular troops. They lived in Moscow and other large cities in special settlements, and in peacetime engaged in the crafts and petty trading. In their mode of life the *Streltsi* hardly differed from the petty townsfolk, and they frequently took part in the outbreaks among the city populace.

The government of Muscovy, making preparations for war against Poland, enlisted the services of several mercenary regiments. The siege of Smolensk in 1632, however, revealed the inefficacy and unreliability of these ill-disciplined mercenaries, who sold their sword to the highest bidder. Therefore, during Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich's reign another method was adopted, one that had been tried and tested in his father's reign. Regiments were formed of Russian recruits and volunteers, with foreign instructors invited to train them according to "foreign" ways. Thus "regiments of foreign formation" were organized consisting of horse and foot units, only the officers of which were foreigners.

In the years immediately following the death of Alexei Mikhailovich there were 63 regiments in the Russian army, trained according to European methods and comprising sixty per cent of all the troops, not counting the Cossacks. In this way the reorganization of the army was begun in the 17th century, and its efficiency improved. An attempt was also made under Alexei Mikhailovich to create a fleet. Foreign masters built the ship "Oryol" (Eagle), but it was destroyed during Razin's uprising

## 55. NIKON'S CHURCH REFORM AND THE SCHISM

**Church Reform.** The Russian autocracy needed a strong church which would still further enhance the power of the tsar and the domination of the nobles. For this purpose it was necessary to subordinate all church organizations more strictly to the highest church power and to eradicate certain local peculiarities in the church service and ritual.

Nikon, a man who exercised great influence over the tsar, became the patriarch during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich. Nikon disposed of the vast possessions of the patriarch and the monasteries as though they were his own estates. His wealth was tremendous. Nikon treated the clergy under him with great severity. The priests called him "a wild beast."

Upon Nikon's orders, a general revision was made of the church service-books and rituals with the object of unifying them. The Greek church served as the model for this. The revision of the church service-books and rituals was conducted under the guidance of Greeks and learned Kiev monks. Nikon gave orders that people make the sign of the cross not with two fingers, as formerly, but with three, as the Greeks did, that icons be painted like the Greek models, and so on. Nor did he confine himself merely to changing certain rituals He propounded the doctrine that the spiritual is higher than the temporal power, the former corresponding to the sun and the latter to the moon in the firmament, which receives its light from the sun. Nikon assumed the official title of "*Veliki*

*Gosudar*"—the "Great Lord," interfered in the affairs of the realm, and even issued orders affecting military operations.

The excessive enhancement of Nikon's power evoked profound discontent among the court aristocracy and the nobles. While lending his support to Nikon's measures for strengthening the church, the tsar was loath to have the royal power eclipsed. Conflicts arose between the tsar and Nikon, which soon ended in a complete rupture. Thinking he would frighten the tsar and the boyars, Nikon unexpectedly discarded the patriarchal vestments and shut himself up in the Voskresensky Monastery (New Jerusalem) Nikon expected the tsar to call him back, but his hopes were doomed to disappointment. In 1666 the tsar convened the church assembly, at which two Greek patriarchs assisted. The assembly blamed Nikon for attempting to subordinate the royal power to himself, yet confirmed all his church reforms. Nikon was exiled to one of the northern monasteries as an ordinary monk.

Thus, Nikon's attempt to raise the church power above the mundane ended in failure. In the struggle between the patriarch and the tsar all the advantages were on the side of the latter. The tsar was supported by the landowning nobles, who regarded the existence of an independent church possessing such vast demesnes with disfavour.

**The Beginning of the Schism in the Orthodox Church.** Nikon's reforms resulted in a great schism in the Russian church. His opponents refused to recognize the innovations introduced by Nikon and demanded that the old ritual be retained. The schismatics were called *Raskolniki* (from the Russian word *raskol*, meaning *schism*) or Old Believers.

The higher clergy and the monasteries, which possessed vast demesnes and a large population of serfs, ruthlessly exploited their peasants, amassed great wealth and deceived the people by means of "miracle-working" icons, sacred relics, etc. With rare exceptions, the monasteries and higher clergy were in favour of Nikon's reforms, which enhanced the power of the ecclesiastical feudal lords still more.

The lower clergy were considerably worse off, and were themselves the victims of the tyranny of the church prelates. The first opponents to Nikon's reforms appeared among the lower clergy. One of them was the protopapas Avvakum of Moscow. For active opposition to Nikon and his church reform Avvakum was exiled to Eastern Siberia where for nearly ten years he was cruelly persecuted and maltreated by the tsar's wayvodes. Upon his return to Moscow Avvakum renewed his war against the church reforms. This time he was banished to the north, to Pustozersk, as a prisoner in an underground dungeon. In 1681 Avvakum was burnt at the stake. His advocacy of ancient ritual and observances was reactionary in character. But Avvakum also looked upon his opposition to innovation as a struggle against the tyranny and abuse of the strong and of the ecumenical authorities.

The defenders of the "Old Belief" who came from among the petty urban population—the craftsmen, traders and army people—were chiefly opposed to the strong power of the dominant church and extortions by a greedy clergy. Among the peasants the struggle against a dominant church was combined with the struggle against feudal serfage. The peasants and petty townspeople sought refuge from feudal oppression in the northern forests, and southern steppes and on the Don, where they formed sectarian communities. They believed, in this manner, to be able to rid themselves of the oppression of serfdom.

Nikon's church reforms were also opposed by a small conservative group of the court nobility and some of the higher clergy, who feared that these innovations would shake the position of the church.

## *Chapter XVI*

# THE UKRAINE AND BYELORUSSIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

### 56. THE UKRAINE AND BYELORUSSIA UNDER POLISH DOMINION

**Seizure of Ukrainian and Byelorussian Lands by the Polish Gentry.** After the conclusion of the Lublin Union between Lithuania and Poland in 1569, a large part of Ukrainian territory (the lands of Volhynia, Kiev, and Chernigov) passed to Poland. The big Polish landed gentry energetically set about helping themselves to Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands. At first they seized the lands of Western Ukraine, but at the end of the 16th century, they crossed to the left bank of the Dnieper. Large holdings of Polish magnates, the Zolkiewskis, Potockis, and others, were formed on Ukrainian territory.

The rapid development of agriculture among the Polish landlords followed increased exports of corn from Poland and Lithuania to Western Europe. Corn from the estates was shipped by water to the ports of the Baltic Sea, the most important of which was Danzig. The condition of the peasants in Poland at that time was worse than in any other European country. The Polish landlords destroyed the peasant communities, which had large sections of land at their disposal. The Polish gentry seized the best community lands, settled the peasants on small plots and imposed heavy taxes and duties upon them. They introduced Polish methods and customs on their Ukrainian and Byelorussian estates.

The Polish landlord enjoyed unlimited power over the population on his estates. He could with impunity appropriate the peasant's



Ukrainian peasants *From a drawing of the 18th century According to Rigelman*

property, inflict whatever punishment he saw fit, and even take his life. The peasants dared not complain to anyone about their persecution or wrongs. The landlords contemptuously called the peasants slaves and cattle.

The Poles suppressed the Ukrainian and Byelorussian national culture. The Polish gentry made use of the Catholic church to strengthen their own position in the Ukraine and in Byelorussia. The spread of Catholicism met with strong resistance from both the peasants and the city population, and some of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian landlords. Thereupon, on the proposal of the Jesuits, a plan was drawn up for the union of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. According to this union, most of the church rituals of the Orthodox believers were to remain unchanged, but the Orthodox church was to be brought under the Papal authority. A church assembly was convened in the city of Brest in 1596 to settle the question of effecting this union. The majority of the assembly were opposed to a union and insisted on the complete independence of the Orthodox church. Their will, however, was overruled by the minority who, despite the opposition, proclaimed the union, which was confirmed by a special edict of the

Polish king. The object of the union was to help subordinate the Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands to Poland, and signified the further intensification of Polish-Papal aggression against Russia.

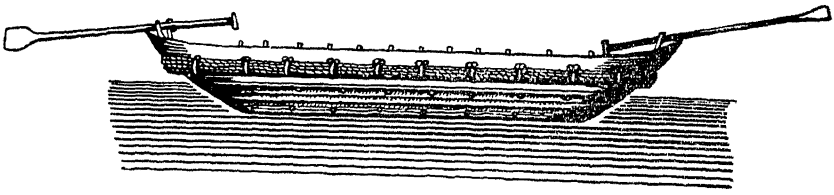
The urban population also suffered from Polish oppression. In the 15th and 16th centuries many Ukrainian and Byelorussian cities had been granted self-government. With the growth of Polish land tenure in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, the cities became dependent upon Polish authority and the Polish landlords. According to Polish law, all landlords had the right to export the products of their estates and to buy whatever goods they needed duty-free. This privilege dealt a serious blow to city trade. The Polish authorities set aside the cities' rights to self-government; the Polish landlords seized the city lands and hampered the crafts and trade.

The Ukrainian and Byelorussian population in the cities united in "brotherhoods," organized under the churches, which fought for the preservation of their national culture and waged war against the Catholic church. The brotherhoods opened their own schools and printing shops, published books, and rendered assistance to their needy members. Some of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian feudal lords copied the Polish gentry and nobles, adopted the Polish language and Polish customs and usages; but the mass of the people remained true to their native language and country, and the Poles were unable to destroy the national culture of the Ukraine and Byelorussia.



Byelorussian peasant. *From a drawing of the 18th century*

The Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasants, to escape the oppression of the Polish landlords, went south, to the still unsettled steppes of the Lower Dnieper. At the same time Russian peasants, to escape the oppression of Russian landlords, migrated to the Don. A fortified camp of Cossacks and runaway peasents from the Ukraine was organized on the Island of Khortitsa, near the Dnieper falls. These people came to be called the



"Gull," a Zaporozhye Cossack boat. *From a 17th century drawing by Beauplan*

*Zaporozhye* (backfalls) Cossacks. Abatises of hewn trees were erected as protection against attacks, whence these fortified Cossack camps came to be called *Sech*, from the Russian word for abatis. The chief pursuits of the Cossacks were fishing, hunting, and various crafts. The Cossacks often waylaid the Tatars returning home to the Crimea after their raids and recaptured their captives and booty. As a reprisal against Turkish and Tatar inroads on Ukrainian lands the Cossacks carried out raids on the Crimea and Turkish towns situated on the Black Sea coast. Zaporozhye practically had no permanent population. The Cossacks gathered at the *Sech* early in the spring when the high tide had fallen. At such times the island became a noisy, populous camp. The Cossacks elected an ataman and other military captains. Hundreds of people were busy building the long Cossack row-boats of willow and linden, called "gulls," repairing their weapons and putting in a stock of provisions. When all preparations had been completed, large numbers of Cossack boats would move swiftly down the Dnieper out into the Black Sea. Usually the Cossacks made for Turkish shores, sometimes reaching the very capital of the sultan—Constantinople. The Cossacks crossed the sea so quickly that the Turkish sentry posts rarely had a chance to warn the sultan of the imminent danger. The strength of the Cossacks lay in the daring and unexpectedness of their attack. In the winter the *Zaporozhskaya Sech* was deserted. The Cossacks left for Ukrainian and Polish cities where they sold the booty they had obtained on their raids and their own products. Only guards remained on Khortitsa Island. Cannon, firearms, boats, etc., were carefully hidden away until the following spring.

At the end of the 16th century the number of Zaporozhye Cossacks increased considerably. Under King Stephen Bathory part of the Cossacks were entered in special lists (registers) and were called "registered Cossacks." The Polish government endeavoured to use them to defend the frontier Polish lands and for purposes of war. The "registered Cossacks" therefore received a salary from the king and were quartered in the cities. Only an insignificant number of Cossacks, consisting of the more wealthy elements, were included in the register.

It was the intention of the Polish government to make serfs of the other Cossacks and return them to the landlords.

At the end of the 16th century a process of class stratification set in among the registered Cossacks, with the appearance of an upper stratum of petty landed proprietors, who acquired their own homesteads, had their own serfs and owned various industries.

The registered Cossack troops were under the command of a hetman, confirmed by the king, with a staff of chiefs, called the "general *starshina*," elected by the Cossacks and consisting of well-to-do members of the Cossack community.

**Popular Uprisings Against Poland.** Polish oppression in the Ukraine and Byelorussia evoked a number of spontaneous popular outbreaks at the end of the 16th century. In these uprisings the Zaporozhye Cossacks usually joined forces with the peasant rebels. Sometimes a part of the registered Cossacks also joined them. During the uprisings the peasants set fire to Polish castles and killed the landlords, who, if they managed to escape, fled to Poland, whence they returned with Polish troops and cruelly avenged themselves on the peasants. The rebels sought refuge in the vast, dense forests along the middle reaches of the Dnieper, from where they waged a protracted partisan warfare.

The first big insurrections took place in the nineties of the 16th century. In 1595 Severin Nalivaiko, the son of a fur-dresser, headed a rebellion which broke out in Volhynia. Nalivaiko's detachments moved to Byelorussia and stirred up the Byelorussian peasants. The rebels captured several cities: Slutsk, Mogilev and Pinsk.

The Polish king, Sigismund III, sent a large army under Hetman Zolkiewski to suppress the uprising. Nalivaiko's detachment was surrounded near the city of Lubny. During an armistice the Poles treacherously killed the disarmed people and transported the leader of the uprising, Nalivaiko, to Warsaw, where he was tortured to death. The peasant movement against the Polish gentry continued into the beginning of the 17th century.

In the thirties of the 17th century the *Zaporozhskaya Sech* rose up once more against the Poles. The uprising was suppressed owing to the treachery of the elders. After this the Poles, with the help of a French engineer, built the fortress of Kodak above the falls to prevent Zaporozhye from having any intercourse with the Ukraine. The Polish hetman invited the Cossacks to look at the fortification that had been put up against them.

"What do you think of Kodak?" he asked mockingly.

"What human hands have built human hands will destroy," Bogdan Khmelnitski, the chief of a Cossack hundred, replied to him.



A Zaporozhye coat of arms.
*From "Verses in Memory of Hetman Sagaidachny" (17th century)*

A few years later another uprising occurred, during which the Cossacks actually destroyed the fortress of Kodak.

Not until 1638, however, did the Polish troops succeed in crushing the popular rebellion in the Ukraine. The Polish Diet abolished "for all time" all Cossack privileges and self-government. The hetman was replaced by a commissary of the Polish government. The number of registered Cossacks was reduced. They were placed under the command of the *szlachta*, the Ukrainian cities were garrisoned by Polish troops.

## 57. THE STRUGGLE OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AGAINST POLAND

**Bogdan Khmelnitski.** After the rebellion of 1638 was suppressed there were no new peasant outbreaks in the Ukraine and Byelorussia for a period of ten years. Punitive expeditions of the Polish *szlachta* went deep into the Ukraine, on the left bank of the Dnieper, and the resistance of the peasants was broken. The Polish nobles called this a time of "golden peace." However, the hatred of the oppressed Ukrainian and Byelorussian population for the Polish power grew all the more intense.

In the spring of 1648 the Ukraine rose up once more against the oppression of the Polish gentry and the power of Poland. The movement was initiated by the Zaporozhye Cossacks under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnitski.

Bogdan Khmelnitski was a popular figure in the Ukraine. He was an educated person, had studied at the Kiev Academy, and knew the Latin language. He had more than once been participant and leader of daring Cossack campaigns. As far back as the 'twenties Bogdan had fought together with the Poles against the Turks, the common enemy of the Ukraine and Poland. Bogdan's father fell in the battle of Chechora near Jassy; Bogdan himself had been taken prisoner by the Turks who kept him in captivity for nearly two years. The Cossacks often elected him to carry on negotiations with the Polish government, at which times Bogdan defended the interests of the Cossacks.

Bogdan Khmelnitski was a prosperous Cossack and was included in the army register. His estate was situated not far from Chigirin The dire condition of the Ukraine under Polish domination aroused Khmelnitski's indignation and wrath. Such indeed was the state of mind of many of the well-to-do registered Cossacks, who were better off than the peasants and rank-and-file Cossacks. Soon Bogdan Khmelnitski personally experienced the savage tyranny of the Polish authorities. A Polish squire by the name of Chaplinski unlawfully obtained an investiture from the Polish authorities to Khmelnitski's estate, suddenly took possession of his homestead and put Khmelnitski's whole household in chains. When Bogdan Khmelnitski sought justice against the offender, Chaplinski flogged Khmelnitski's ten-year-old son to death. Khmelnitski likewise failed to obtain redress at the king's court. This incident strikingly demonstrated to the Cossack elder the defenceless state of the Ukrainian people at the mercy of arbitrary Polish rule.



Bogdan Khmelnitski. *From a contemporary portrait from the Collection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Returning home after his failure to obtain justice at Warsaw, Bogdan Khmelnitski gathered his Cossack friends in a secret conference, at which he called upon them, for the first time, to raise a rebellion against Polish domination.

"Can we leave our brothers in such distress?" he asked. "I have seen dreadful persecution everywhere. Our unhappy people ask for help."

The old Cossacks replied: "It is time to take up the sword, time to throw off the Polish yoke."

The Polish gentry, learning of Khmelnitski's plans through some traitors, imprisoned him. Khmelnitski succeeded in escaping to Zaporozhye, where he fortified himself on one of the islands. Meanwhile, peasant outbreaks had begun in the Ukraine. There was not a village or hamlet where the call to rise was not heard. One Polish squire confiscated several thousand firearms which had been hidden by his peasants. The gentry hastily left their castles, abandoning their property, and fled to Poland. There was every sign of an imminent general uprising in the Ukraine.

Bogdan Khmelnitski realized that the struggle against the well-armed, numerous Polish troops would be a difficult one. He therefore hit on the expedient of forming an alliance with the Crimean khan. Khmelnitski left Zaporozhye for the capital of the Crimea—Bakhchisarai. At that time the Crimean khan's displeasure was roused against the Polish king, who had not paid him any tribute for several years. The khan sent a body of Tatars with Khmelnitski under the command of one of his princes. *Zaporozhskaya Sech* welcomed Bogdan's return from the Crimea with acclamation, and at an assembly of the Cossacks proclaimed him the hetman of the Cossack troops and presented him the insignia of hetman's office—the *bulava*, or baton.

In the spring of 1648 Khmelnitski and his Cossacks set forth from Zaporozhye. The Polish troops under Hetman Potocki went out to meet them. In the beginning of May Khmelnitski defeated a detached Polish army corps at *Zheltiye Vody* (Yellow Waters). The Cossacks serving in this corps had gone over to Khmelnitski before the battle started. News of the defeat caused Potocki to beat a hasty retreat. Khmelnitski pursued the enemy, and in the middle of May completely routed him at Korsun. Hetman Potocki was taken prisoner. The Cossacks and Tatars obtained rich booty.

**The Uprisings of the Peasants.** The victories over the Polish troops won by the Cossacks under Bogdan Khmelnitski were followed by a wave of peasant uprisings that spread throughout the Ukraine. Landlords abandoned their castles and property and fled to Poland. The rebellious peasants found brave leaders in their own midst, notable among whom was Maxim Krivonos, or as he was called in folklore, *Perebiinos* (Broken Nose). Jeremiah Wisniowiecki, a rich Polish-Ukrainian magnate, used incredibly cruel means in his attempt to crush the rebellion. But he was unable to withstand the encounter with the Cossack-peasant detachments led by Maxim Krivonos, who appeared with astonishing rapidity at rallying points of the Polish gentry. The Ukraine was followed by Byelorussia, where dozens of peasant detachments were also formed. A contingent of Byelorussian peasants under Krivoshapka operated daringly and effectively.

Bogdan Khmelnitski started his war with Poland in the interests of the registered Cossacks. He demanded from Poland that she increase the number of registered Cossack troops, restore the Cossacks the rights they had been deprived of, pay up overdue salaries, and cease her persecution of the Orthodox church. The mass uprising of the peasants and the support rendered by the urban population showed Khmelnitski that it was not the Cossacks alone who were fighting Poland, but the entire Ukrainian people. Bogdan Khmelnitski headed the liberation movement of the Ukrainian people.

Together with Maxim Krivonos, who had joined him, he inflicted

another, even more terrible defeat upon the Polish royal troops in September 1648, on the Pilyavka River.

The victory over the main Polish forces on the Pilyavka River opened the way to Warsaw before Khmelnitski. Khmelnitski continued his offensive, and driving the Poles before him out of the Ukraine, he advanced as far as Lwow and Zamostye, then returned to Kiev. The people acclaimed him as the liberator of the Ukraine from Polish bondage. After bearing a yoke for three hundred years, Kiev was liberated and returned to the Ukraine.

The Polish government sent envoys to Kiev to conclude peace, hoping thereby to gain time to collect a new army. Khmelnitski, bearing in mind the successes of the peasant uprisings, demanded that the Ukraine be freed of Polish troops. "I shall wrest the entire Ukrainian people from Polish captivity," he said to the Polish envoys. The peace negotiations came to nothing.

**The Zborov Peace.** Khmelnitski opened a new campaign in the summer of 1649. He was joined by the Crimean khan, who came with a large Tatar force. Near the city of Zborov the Cossacks and Tatars surrounded the Polish troops. However, the Polish gentry succeded in bribing the Crimean khan, who, upon receiving a large amount of gold from them, suggested to Khmelnitski that he conclude peace with the king. Appreciating the danger the Tatars represented in the event of his falling out with the khan, Khmelnitski consented and concluded a peace treaty which has become known as the Zborov Treaty. By this treaty part of the Ukraine was set up as an independent administration with its own hetman, Bogdan Khmelnitski. The number of registered Cossacks was raised from 6,000 to 40,000.

With the conclusion of the Zborov Peace Treaty in 1649 ended the first stage in the Ukraine's war of liberation. The peace terms satisfied the main demands of the rich registered Cossacks. It was otherwise, however, with the rank-and-file Cossacks and the peasants. Many peasants who had fought against the Polish gentry and had not been included among the 40,000 registered troops provided for by the peace treaty, had to return to their former places, to their former owners. The peasants remained as of old feudal serfs of the landlords. After the conclusion of peace the Polish gentry began to return to their Ukrainian estates. The Zborov Peace Treaty did not satisfy the peasants, who therefore did not wish to cease their struggle and refused to let the gentry return to their estates.

**Renewal of War.** Poland regarded the Zborov Peace as a respite which it needed for reorganizing its defeated army. The gentry also took advantage of this respite to crush the peasant movement. The fields were strewn with the corpses of peasants and city people, who had been tortured and murdered. Many peasant leaders lost their lives, among them Maxim Krivonos. In the beginning of 1651 Polish troops invaded the

western region of the Ukraine before Khmelnitski had a chance to assemble his Cossacks to repel the attack. The valiant Nechai fell in the beginning of the new war.

In the spring of 1651 a large Polish army headed by the king took the field. The Pope absolved of their sins all those who took part in the war against the Ukrainian people. Khmelnitski once more joined forces with the Crimean khan. The battle began in June 1651, near Berestechko, but during the course of the fighting the Tatars suddenly deserted the Cossacks and withdrew. Bogdan Khmelnitski hastened to the khan to urge him to return to the battlefield. But the khan not only did not return, but detained the hetman. The Cossacks and peasants, left leaderless, entrenched themselves in their camp and for several days bravely repelled the attacks of the Poles. Bogun, known alike to the Cossacks and Poles for his extraordinary strength and courage, especially distinguished himself in these clashes. The Cossacks elected Bogun as their leader. He organized sallies and amazed the enemy by his military cunning and the daring of his unexpected attacks.

However, the forces were unequal, and the necessity of effecting a withdrawal became obvious to the Cossacks. During the night some of them left unnoticed by a wooden paving laid across the swamp. When dawn came the Poles rushed the camp, and wreaked cruel vengeance upon the few remaining defenders, among whom were many poorly-armed peasants. About three hundred Cossacks entrenched themselves upon a small island and stubbornly continued to defend themselves. The Poles proposed that they surrender and promised to spare their lives, but the answer they got from the Cossacks was: "We do not hold our lives dear, and we abhor the favour of the enemy." Saying which the Cossacks embraced each other and rushed at the Poles. All the Cossacks died the death of heroes.

It was not until a month later that the Crimean khan released Khmelnitski. By that time the Poles had taken Kiev, and the Tatars had ravaged the country ruthlessly. The hetman had to agree to the onerous terms of a peace treaty signed in the autumn of 1651 at Belaya Tserkov. Almost everything that had been won in hard struggle was now lost again. The number of registered Cossack troops was reduced to 20,000. The Cossacks were deprived of the rights they had received under the Zborov Peace Treaty.

When the Polish landlords returned to the Ukraine, they cruelly avenged themselves on the peasants for their participation in the struggle. Fleeing from persecution the peasants thronged to the left bank of the Dnieper and pushed on further into the territory of the Russian state. The Ukrainian territory under Polish power became quickly deserted. Meanwhile the Ukrainian population colonized the fertile regions along the upper reaches of the Northern Donets, where dozens of

new Ukrainian settlements sprang up. This region came to be called the *"Slobodskaya Ukraina."*

Despite the peace of Belaya Tserkov, detachments of the Polish gentry continued to pillage Ukrainian villages and settlements, to rob and kill the inhabitants, sparing neither old people, women, nor children. The Polish king made peace with the Crimean khan and gave him leave to despoil the Ukrainian population during a period of forty days. An endless stream of fettered captives filled the roads to the Crimea. The Crimeans carried off tens of thousands of men and women, doomed to a life of slavery. An ancient Ukrainian song says of those times

*Ukraine's people grieving, they have nowhere to hide,*
*The hordes of nomad horsemen o'er children's bodies ride,*
*The tender babes they trample, the old they lead away,*
*With arms behind them shackled to be the dread khan's prey.*

## 58. INCORPORATION OF THE UKRAINE INTO THE RUSSIAN STATE WAR WITH POLAND

**Incorporation of the Ukraine into the Russian State.** The war of 1648-1651 clearly demonstrated that the Ukraine could not free herself from Polish bondage unaided. Surrounded as she was by more powerful states, there could be no question of securing independence at that time. Therefore, when, in 1652, the Ukrainian peasants and Cossacks rose a second time against the Polish landlords and the Polish power, Khmelnitski entered into negotiations with the Moscow government for the Ukraine's incorporation into the Russian state. At the *Zemski Sobor* assembled in Moscow in the autumn of 1653 Russia decided to take the Ukraine under her protection and to declare war on Poland. On January 8, 1654, the *Rada*, *i.e.*, the conference of representatives of the Ukraine Cossacks, met in Pereyaslavl, with Moscow envoys attending. Hetman Bogdan Khmelnitski addressed the assembled Cossacks, reminding them of the difficult position the Ukrainian people were in.

"You all know," he said, "that our enemy wishes to exterminate us so thoroughly, that even the name Rūs (*i.e.*, Ukrainian) will never again be mentioned in our land. Therefore select one of four rulers for yourselves. The first is the Turkish sultan; he oppresses the Greeks. The second is the Crimean khan; he has shed the blood of our brothers many times, the third is the Polish king. There is no need to tell you of the persecution by the Polish gentry. The fourth is the tsar of great Rūs, the Eastern tsar."

Thousands of voices replied: "We will (*i.e.*, wish) to be under the Eastern tsar."

Under an agreement concluded somewhat later in Moscow the Ukraine received the right of self-government, headed by an elected hetman. The number of registered Cossacks was set at 60,000.

It was much more difficult for the Ukrainian people to tolerate the rule of the Polish king and the Polish landlords than to be subjects of the Russian tsar. The *Velikorussi* (Great Russians) were kin to the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peoples by origin, language and culture. The Ukraine's incorporation into the Russian state signified a reunion of two great fraternal peoples which was to save the Ukraine from seizure by Poland and Turkey.

**War with Poland and Sweden.** Poland was unwilling to relinquish the Ukraine to Russia. Only war, therefore, could liberate the Ukraine from Polish domination. In Moscow it was decided to begin a war with Poland for both the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The war broke out in 1654 and continued, with intermissions, for thirteen years (1654-1667). During the very first year of the war almost the entire territory of Byelorussia was liberated from Polish oppression. In many cities the residents themselves drove out the Polish garrisons. The population greeted the Russian troops with joy. In the autumn Smolensk surrendered. The following summer Russian troops occupied Vilno. At the same time Ukrainian and Russian troops waged a successful struggle in the region west of the Dnieper against the Poles, and the Tatars who had gone over to their side. After liberating the Ukrainian lands, Bogdan Khmelnitski and the Muscovy waywodes crossed the Polish frontier and took possession of Lublin.

In 1656 the Swedish king, Charles X, intent on seizing certain regions of Poland, intervened in the war. He occupied Warsaw, Cracow, and many other Polish cities. Swedish aggression induced the Polish government to start peace negotiations with Muscovy. In the interests of a lasting peace, the government of Muscovy demanded of the Polish envoys the relinquishment of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Since, however, Poland did not agree to these terms, only a truce was signed, by the terms of which both sides ceased hostilities.

The struggle with Poland once more proved to Russia her need of Baltic ports in order to maintain relations with Western Europe, whence she received arms and military supplies. The government of Muscovy decided to make an attempt to wrest from Sweden the southern shore of the Baltic Sea, which the latter had seized in the first half of the 17th century. The war with Sweden started in 1656. The Russian army captured several Swedish fortresses on the Western Dvina and besieged Riga. The siege was a failure, inasmuch as the garrison of the Swedish fortress received reinforcement from the sea. The war dragged on for several years with alternating success. In 1661 the Treaty of Kardis was concluded; according to its terms both sides retained their former possessions. This time, too, Russia failed to acquire an outlet to the Baltic Sea.

In 1657 Bogdan Khmelnitski died His hetmanship had been recognized throughout the Ukraine After his death a struggle for power broke out among the rival factions of Ukrainian elders. Poland took advantage of this conflict and tried to bribe the Ukrainian feudal lords, the elders and the rich Cossacks, with money and promises. The new hetman, Wigowski, a *szlachcic* by origin, and some of his Cossack elders went over to the side of Poland In league with the Crimean khan he succeeded in defeating the Russian troops near Konotop. In violation of the truce the Polish troops also reopened hostilities. However, the rank-and-file Cossacks and the Ukrainian peasants did not support the Polish faction, but continued to fight manfully shoulder to shoulder with the Russian troops for the liberation of the Ukraine. Both sides, Poland and Russia, were greatly exhausted by the protracted war. At last, in 1667, after prolonged negotiations, the Truce of Andrusovo was signed (in the village of Andrusovo, near Smolensk) for $13^1/_2$ years. Russia retained part of Byelorussia, Smolensk, and the Ukrainian lands on the left bank of the Dnieper. On the right bank of the Dnieper Russia acquired Kiev and the adjoining district for two years, but it did not return this land to the Poles upon the expiry of this period. In 1686 the Poles had to agree to the union of Kiev with Russia in perpetuity.

## *Chapter XVII*

# POPULAR UPRISINGS IN RUSSIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY

### 59. THE MOSCOW UPRISING OF 1662

**Intensification of the Class Struggle.** Increased feudal oppression in the 17th century led to the intensification of the class struggle, especially in connection with the war against Poland, since the entire burden of taxation and compulsory services fell on the shoulders of the exploited population. Sporadic uprisings broke out in different parts of the country in the sixties of the 17th century, followed during 1670-1671 by a peasant war which swept over the vast southeastern section of Russia.

The country's economic difficulties during the war with Poland over the Ukraine were aggravated by the disorganization of the monetary system. In 1654 the tsarist government, to meet heavy military expenditures, issued a copper currency, whereas until then only silver coins

had been in circulation. The government placed the copper coinage on a par with silver although the value of copper was only about one-hundredth that of silver. During a period of eight years a tremendous number of copper coins were minted This led to a sharp rise in the price of all commodities, especially of food. The peasants stopped selling corn for copper money. The resultant economic chaos mostly affected the city poor. The Streltsi and lesser military servitors, who received their compensation in copper coin, also found themselves in sore straits.

Driven to the point of despair the indigent townspeople started a revolt in Moscow on July 25, 1662. The morning of that day placards appeared in various parts of the capital, giving the names of the most unpopular tsarist boyars and rich merchants A crowd of people, including craftsmen, soldiers and Streltsi set off for the village of Kolomenskoye, near Moscow, where Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich was residing at the time. The crowd forced the tsar to come out of the church in order to negotiate with them, and threateningly demanded that the most odious of the boyars be delivered into their hands, that taxes be abated and copper coinage abolished. The frightened tsar, wishing to gain time, promised everything they asked. But the rebels did not trust him, and shouted: "What are we to believe?" The tsar took his oath that he would do everything, and struck hands on it with one of the people in the crowd. Deceived by the tsar's promise the crowd was on its way back to Moscow, when it met and mingled with another crowd coming to Kolomenskoye from Moscow. The insurgents once more broke into Kolomenskoye just at the moment when the tsar was mounting his horse to set off for Moscow.

By this time regiments of the Streltsi had been drawn up in Kolomenskoye, having been let through the back gates of the royal residence The tsar changed his tone and commanded: "Let these people be beaten and slashed to death and those that remain be seized alive." The Streltsi suddenly attacked the unarmed crowd and drove it to the Moskva River. Many were hacked to death, many others were drowned in the river; most were taken prisoner. The tsar's government cruelly punished the rebels. However, fearing a new outbreak, the tsar abolished copper money.

## 60. THE VOLGA REGION IN THE 17TH CENTURY

**Peoples of the Volga Region.** The vast forests and plains of the Volga region on both banks of the Volga were inhabited by non-Russian, Ural-Altaic tribes. In the wooded area east of the Vyatka River lived the Udmurts (Votyaks). The Mari (Cheremissi) inhabited the left bank of the Volga between the Vyatka and Vetluga rivers and the right bank between the Volga and the Sura rivers. They were divided into the

"meadow" dwellers inhabiting the lowlands on the left bank of the Volga, which was covered with forests and marshland, and the "hill" people, who lived on the right high bank of the river. The Chuvashes and Mordvinians were neighbours of the Mari. The Mordvinian settlements covered the territory of the Lower Oka and the upper reaches of the Sura. Tatars lived on both banks of the Lower Kama. The lands southeast of the Kama and along the Ufa River were occupied by the Bashkirs (Turki) There were also Bashkirs living beyond the Urals, along the upper reaches of the Tobol River. After the conquest of the Kazan khanate by Ivan IV all these peoples were incorporated into the Russian state.

The tsarist government collected from the conquered peoples of the Volga region a tax in kind, the tribute which they had formerly (until 1552) been paying to the Kazan khan and his vassals. Part of the population paid in addition a money tax. The tsar's tax-gatherers committed all sorts of outrages, and confiscated the people's corn and cattle. The monasteries and landlords endeavoured to seize the fertile lands and forests which abounded in fur-bearing animals, and to enslave the population.

To establish its power more firmly over the Volga peoples, the tsarist government resorted to the assistance of the church, which was converting the people to Orthodoxy. Forcible Christianization was particularly intensified during the patriarchy of Nikon. The Orthodox priests gathered together the peasants of the Mordvinian villages and baptized them, then compelled these people to hew down their "sacred" groves and burn the log structures placed above the graves of their ancestors.

**The Condition of Bashkiria.** The chief occupation of the Bashkirs was nomadic herding. The Bashkirs also engaged in hunting for fur-bearing animals, collecting the honey of wild bees, and fishing. By the 17th century the Bashkirs in some places had already begun to cultivate the soil. Villages appeared, consisting of small log cabins. During the summer the Bashkirs drove their herds of cattle and droves of horses to graze on the steppe, returning to their winter settlements in the late autumn.

Bashkiria was divided into volosts, each volost in its turn consisted of several communities. The volosts were made up of people who considered themselves descendants of a single clan. In the 17th century, however, the clan system among the Bashkirs had disintegrated. Although the pasture lands were nominally the common property of the entire volost or of its subdivision, the community, actually the rich people, who were called princes, *tarkhani* and *batyri*, disposed of the lands. They possessed large herds of cattle, received substantial incomes from the population, and forced the dependent people to work on their estates.

The Bashkirs, like the other peoples of the Middle Volga, had to pay tribute to the tsarist government in the form of marten, fox, squirrel, and other valuable furs. In the 17th century the Russian landlords and the monasteries seized the rich Bashkirian lands (dense forests, excellent fisheries, salt mines, the black-earth steppe, pasture land, and tilths) greatly to the detriment of Bashkirian cattle breeding and woodland pursuits. In order to strengthen its power the tsarist government built a large number of fortified cities here, among them the city of Ufa.

**The Kalmucks.** The Kalmucks (Mongols) appeared in the region of the Lower Volga in the thirties of the 17th century. Formerly they had led a nomadic life in Asia, north of Lake Zaisan, in the mountainous land known as Jungaria. The Kalmucks lived in tribes ruled by princes. The tribes were independent of each other, but when threatened by an attack of neighbouring peoples, they were apt to form a league under the leadership of the strongest tribe and its prince.

In the beginning of the 17th century one of the more populous Kalmuck tribes brought its camps close to the upper reaches of the Irtysh River and started attacking Russian towns. Moving further southwest, some of the Kalmucks, in the thirties of the 17th century, occupied the steppe between the Yaik and the Volga. In 1656 these Kalmucks swore allegiance to Russia. At the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century the Volga Kalmucks were ruled by Ayuka Khan, who, though he professed allegiance to the Russian tsar, conducted himself independently and even attacked Russian towns along the Volga. The Jungaria Kalmucks formed a state which grew very strong at the end of the 17th century.

**Uprisings in the Volga Region and Western Siberia.** The peoples along the Volga fought stubbornly against the tsarist government, defended their lands against encroachment, and frequently raised rebellions. Some of these revolts lasted for several years. The largest outbreaks were those of the Bashkirs, which were adhered to by other peoples of the Volga and Western Siberia—the Tatars, Mari (Cheremissi), Chuvashes, Kalmucks, Mansi, and Khanti.

In 1662 an uprising broke out simultaneously in several parts of Bashkiria and Western Siberia. A descendant of the Siberian khan Kuchum led the revolt of the Tatars, Bashkirs, and Voguls (Mansi) in Western Siberia. The insurgents attacked Russian fortified cities and destroyed the monasteries and Russian settlements. The rebellion lasted for several years and was suppressed with difficulty. The tsarist troops, reinforced by regiments of "foreign formation" were sent from Moscow to the Volga, where they exterminated the population, not even sparing "mere infants," as the official report expressed it.

When this uprising was crushed, the tsarist government took possession of other Bashkirian lands. Young Bashkirs were forcibly conscripted into the tsar's army and sent to fight against the Crimea. A new Bashkirian uprising broke out in the middle of the 'seventies, at first merely in the form of isolated armed conflicts, which reached its climax in 1682, Seit Sadir, the elder of one of the Bashkirian volosts, directing the rebellion (it was called the Seit rebellion after him). The Kalmucks, headed by Ayuka Khan, supported the Bashkirs. The Kalmuck leader played traitor by going over to the tsarist government; this circumstance, combined with the ever-growing rivalry and feuds between Kalmucks and Bashkirs over pasturage, facilitated the suppression of the uprising.

## 61. POPULAR UPRISING UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF STEPAN RAZIN

**The Don Cossacks in the 17th Century.** The Don Cossacks were not a homogeneous people. Those living on the Lower Don were called the "lowers." Some of them, the rich (or *domovitiye*—thrifty ones), who had seized elective posts, formed a group of their own. They traded with Russian cities, as well as with the Caucasus, the Crimea and Turkey. In exchange for grain, wine, weapons, gunpowder, cloth, and other commodities imported from Russia, the rich Cossacks supplied fish, furs, good Nogai horses and military booty. They used the labour of the poor Cossacks, the *golytba*, in their industrial pursuits and trade. The rich Cossacks supplied the poor with arms, clothing and food, and sent them on freebooting expeditions. They robbed the trading vessels of Muscovy merchants plying on the Volga, raided the Caspian coast, and pillaged the domains of the Crimean Tatars. When successful, the Cossacks brought back with them rich spoils, the greater share of which was appropriated by the wealthy Cossacks. The administrative centre of the "Lower Don" Cossacks was the city of Cherkassk.

The Cossacks living on the Middle Don and its tributaries were called the "uppers." They, too, had among them a number of more prosperous Cossacks, who had succeeded in acquiring their own farmsteads. Some of them had been born on the Don and had lived there many years. They were called *starozhily*—old settlers. But the bulk of the "upper" Cossacks belonged to the Cossack poor, whose numbers were constantly being augmented by "newcomers" from Russian cities, consisting of fugitive peasants, serfs, poor townsfolk, and other propertyless people. Meanwhile the fertile lands on the upper left tributaries of the Don were being seized by the monasteries, big landowners, members of the royal family and the great boyars. The runaway peasants

and serfs were in danger of being returned to their former landlords or enslaved by the local landowners.

In the sixties of the 17th century, impoverishment and hunger drove a still larger number of "fugitives" and "newcomers" to the Don. With the increase in population on the Don there was a palpable shortage of corn, which was imported from the more northern Russian cities.

**Uprising of Stepan Razin.** In the 'sixties signs of unrest were in evidence among the hungry Cossack poor. In 1666 the valiant Cossack ataman, Vasili Uss, stirred up the Don poor against Muscovy and came before Tula with a large Cossack force. He was joined by the serfs of the southern landlords. At the same time an ataman appeared among the poor of the Don, Stepan Timofeyevich Razin, who became the leader of a great Cossack and peasant uprising.

In the spring of 1667 a detachment of the poor under the command of Stepan Razin made its way from the Don to the Volga. The Cossacks seized several river boats with corn and other merchandise belonging to the tsar, the patriarch, and the rich merchant. Vasili Shorin One of the boats carried exiles who were fettered in irons. The Cossacks killed the guard and set the prisoners free. Razin said to the exiles, the Streltsi and the oarsmen: "You are all free, go where you will. I shall not use force, but whoever wishes to stay with me will be a free Cossack. I have come to fight only the boyars and rich lords, but with the poor and simple folk I am ready to share everything as a brother."

Razin's Cossacks sailed down to the Caspian, slipping past Astrakhan; they went in thirty-five galleys, and headed for the River Yaik (the Ural), where they seized the fortified town of Yaitsk.

Razin spent the winter on the Yaik. The following spring he went down to the sea and sailed to the shores of Persia. By this time Razin's force numbered several thousand Cossacks. He ravaged the Caucasian shores of the Caspian. When the Cossack craft approached Persia, Razin sent several men to the shah to say that he and his Cossacks were ready to remain and live on his lands forever, since they did not want to suffer the persecutions of Muscovy's boyars any longer. The shah, acting in accord with Muscovy, ordered Razin's envoys to be done to death. At that the Cossacks started to pillage and sack Persian towns. The shah sent fifty boats with soldiers against Razin's detachment. A fierce sea engagement took place, during which most of the Persian ships were sunk.

Notwithstanding these successes, Razin could not remain any longer on the Caspian shores. The Cossacks had suffered heavy losses in killed and wounded in their battles with the Persians, and disease was rife among the survivors.

In the autumn of 1669 Razin reappeared at Astrakhan. During his absence the city had been strongly fortified and its garrison increased.

The Astrakhan waywodes, however, were reluctant to fight against Razin, who had the avowed sympathy of the population. Anxious to get rid of this leader of the Cossack poor as quickly as possible, the waywodes agreed to let Razin's detachment pass up the Don, but demanded that he surrender the booty and weapons he was carrying.

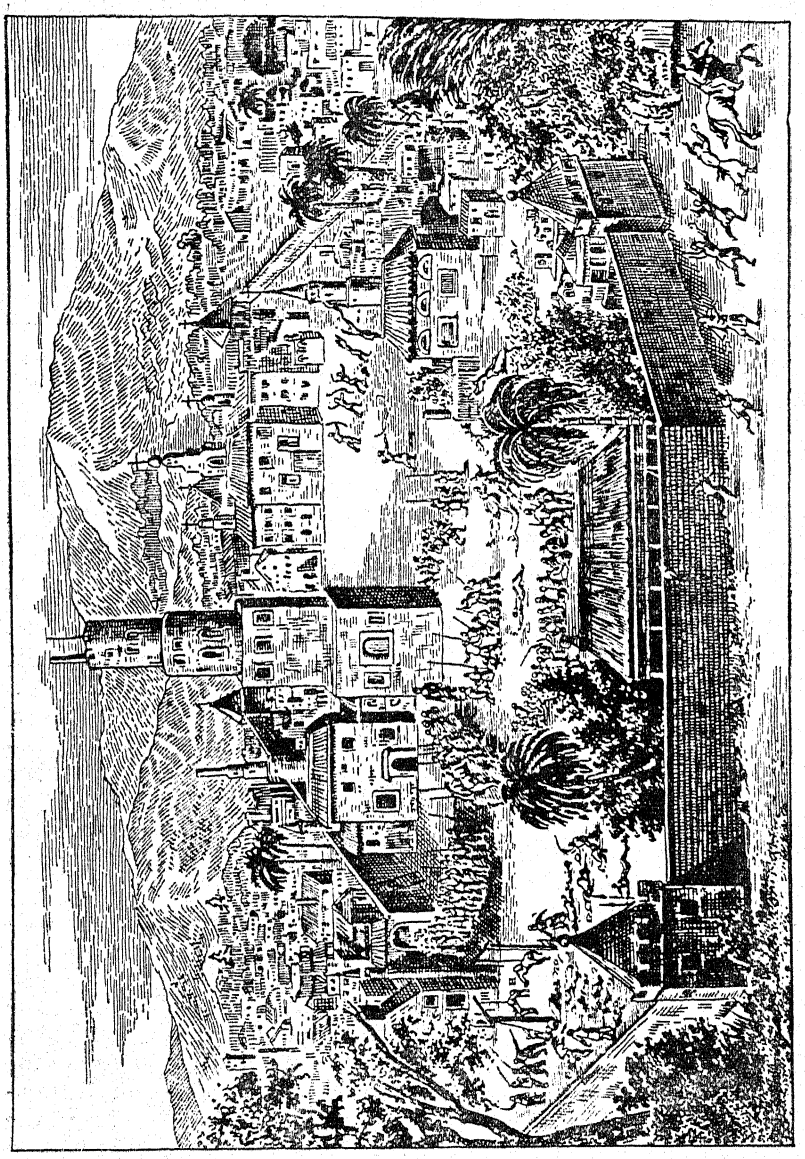
The Astrakhan poor greeted Stepan Razin enthusiastically, calling him their *batka* (father). Razin's Cossacks, who had been in tatters when they had set off on their expedition, were now dressed in exquisite silk clothes embroidered with gold. Razin generously distributed gold coins and valuables to the people.

He did not surrender his arms, as the waywodes had demanded. Instead, he set off with a well-armed detachment for the Don, where the fame of his successes had already become widespread. Some of the Astrakhan inhabitants went off with him.

On the Don, just above the mouth of the Donets, Razin's Cossacks built a fortress on an island, which was named the *Kagalnitski Gorodok*. Cossacks, peasants, serfs, as well as runaway Streltsi hastened to this town from all sides to join Razin. Taking part of his detachment with him, Razin set off for Cherkassk, where a Cossack assembly had gathered for negotiations with the tsar's envoy, Yevdokimov, who had been sent from Moscow to collect data on the movement of the poor Cossacks and to promise gifts to the rich Cossacks if they remained loyal to the tsar. Stepan Razin arrived on the scene just when the rich Cossacks were about to elect a return mission to Moscow. With the appearance of Razin in Cherkassk the temper of the Cossacks changed sharply; the poor went over to his side, and the tsar's envoy, Yevdokimov, was killed.

From Cherkassk Stepan Razin, with new detachments of poor, sailed up the Don and crossed over to the Volga. Cossacks and peasants kept joining him in whole detachments, groups and singly. Among these was Vasili Uss. He became Razin's closest aide. By this time the rebels numbered over 7,000 men. Razin, aided by the inhabitants, easily captured Tsaritsyn (now called Stalingrad) where he seized large supplies of arms.

Razin's second appearance on the Volga in the spring of 1670 marked the beginning of a new period in the Cossack and peasant uprising. At first Razin had appeared in the role of a Cossack freebooting ataman, though even then his operations had differed from the usual Cossack raids undertaken with the object of obtaining war booty. He freed the slaves and always showed himself to be the enemy of the waywodes, the nobles and the rich merchants. The success of his campaign contributed to the rapid rise of the Cossack movement on the Don. Talk of the glorious ataman of the Cossack poor spread far beyond the boundaries of the Cossack settlements. Razin became the leader of a spontaneous popular uprising. After taking Tsaritsyn he decided to march into the interior of Russia. To do this he first had to take pos-



The capture of Astrakhan by Razin. *From the book "Three Journeys of the Hollander Jan Streiss" (17th century)*

session of Astrakhan and entrench himself on the Lower Volga. The Astrakhan waywode sent a force of Streltsi against Razin; but these men killed their officers and went over to the insurgents. In June 1670 Razin approached Astrakhan. The city was surrounded by a high stone wall with towers and battlements bristling with cannon. The waywode prepared to repel the attack. But many Streltsi and townsfolk within the city were only waiting for an opportunity to help the Cossacks seize the fortress.

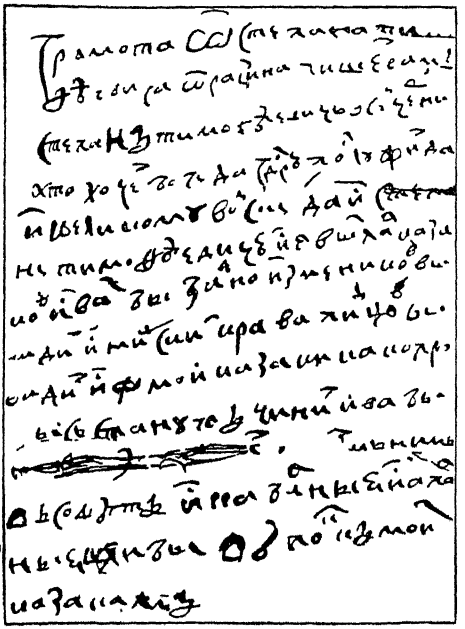
When dusk fell the bells rang out, sounding the tocsin. This was the signal that the Cossacks had begun their attack. The armed nobles rushed to that part of the wall from where the shouts of the combatants could be heard. Meanwhile the Cossacks, under cover of darkness, approached the fortress unnoticed from the other side. They set up scaling ladders against the high walls and climbed into the city.

The residents were waiting on the walls to help them. Five cannon shots were fired as a signal that the city had surrendered. The poor of Astrakhan joined Razin's Cossacks and killed the nobles and all others who offered any resistance. By morning Astrakhan was captured.

From Astrakhan Razin moved up the Volga. The uprising spread far and wide over both banks of the river. Razin's forces grew daily. Cossacks, Streltsi, serfs and peasants flocked to him from every side. Hatred against the landlords was so intense that the peasants brought with them the severed heads of their lords in bags, and threw them at Razin's feet. Since Razin's campaign up the Volga the peasant population became the chief force of the uprising.

The insurgents were poorly armed, many of them having merely axes, knives and lances. But the Streltsi of the royal garrisons had no desire to fight against the people. They tied the nobles and officers hand and foot and opened the gates of the fortresses to Razin. Thus, with the help of the Streltsi and the population Razin quickly captured Saratov (old Saratov was situated on the left bank of the Volga, somewhat above the Saratov of today) and Samara (now the city of Kuibyshev), but he encountered stubborn resistance at Simbirsk (now Ulyanovsk).

Razin's messengers went throughout the countryside and secretly circulated appeals in which Razin called upon "all the rabble," that is, all the poor and oppressed, to rise in rebellion. He said he was acting for the "Great Sovereign" against the traitors—the boyars and nobles. Razin himself, like most of the people, naively believed that the tsarist power would espouse their cause against the boyars. It was rumoured among the people that the Tsarevich Alexei Alexeyevich, the tsar's son, and the brave Nechai, leader of Ukrainian peasant detachments, were with Razin. As a matter of fact, Nechai had long since been killed by the Polish gentry in the Ukraine, and Tsarevich Alexei Alexeyevich



"Prelestnoye Pismo" from Stepan Razin
"Letter from Stepan Timofeyevich Razin
Stepan Timofeyevich writes to you, to all the common people. If any of you wish to serve God and the tsar, and our own great army and Stepan Timofeyevich as well—to them have I sent Cossacks, that together you destroy the traitors and destroy those sucking the blood of the people. And as soon as my Cossacks rise in action, join them, you slaves and the persecuted—all join my Cossack regiments."

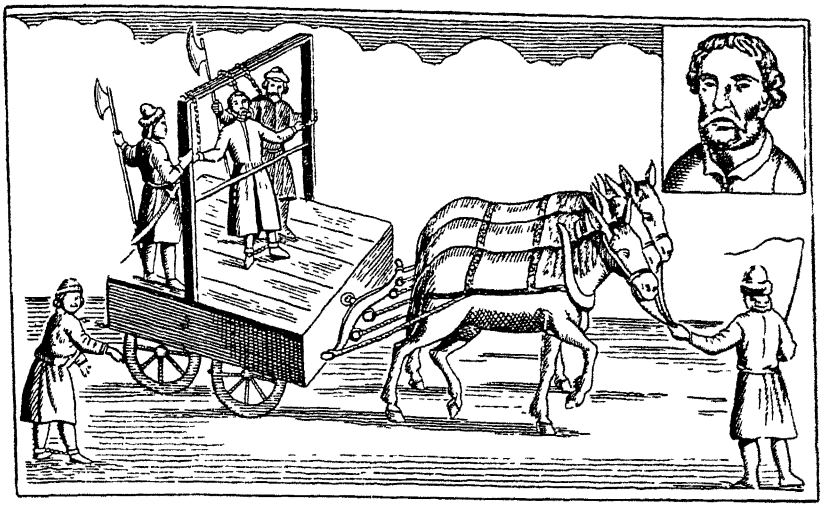
had died before the uprising began.

Razin's appeals for an uprising were addressed not only to the Russians, but also to the Tatar, Chuvash, Mordvinian and other oppressed peoples. The population on both the right and the left banks of the Volga responded to his call.

Razin's successes on the Volga and the rapid spread of the peasant rebellion seriously alarmed Moscow. The tsar mobilized the Moscow and provincial nobles, the Streltsi, and regiments of "foreign formation." The whole of this huge army, led by Prince Yuri Dolgoruki, was sent to suppress the uprising.

For almost a month Razin besieged Simbirsk. In the beginning of October 1670 Razin's detachment and the tsar's troops, which had come up, met in battle near Simbirsk. In the hand-to-hand mêlée that ensued there was such a confusion of combatants that it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Razin could be seen in the thick of the battle. He had a sabre cut on his head and a bullet wound in the leg, yet he kept on fighting. In spite of its obdurate resistance, Razin's detachment was routed. Razin retreated to the Don with a small group of Cossacks.

Although Razin was defeated at Simbirsk, the peasant rebellion continued to spread until it embraced a tremendous territory: up the Volga to Kazan and Nizhni Novgorod, and on the right bank of the Volga almost to the Oka River. The rebels seized Temnikov and Penza and besieged Tambov and other cities. The Kalmucks, Tatars, Mordvinians, Cheremissi (Mari), Chuvashes and Bashkirs on the right and left banks of the Volga joined the insurrection.



Stepan Razin and his brother (tied to the cart) being taken to their execution. Inset: Portrait of Stepan Razin *From an English engraving*

On the right bank of the Volga the serfs united with the poor urban population. The peasants destroyed the estates of the landlords and successfully waged a partisan war against the tsar's troops. One big rebel force was commanded by a peasant woman named Alyona, a native of Arzamas. The rebellion on the Volga found a response in other places as well, near Kolomna outside of Moscow, and in the Northern Maritime region. Stepan Razin's brother, Frol, operated in *Slobodskaya Ukraina*. However, the isolated peasant detachments were unable to resist the well-armed troops for a long time. The tsar's army converged on the insurgent areas from different sides and wreaked savage vengeance on the population.

The captured peasants were taken to the city of Arzamas where they were tortured and executed. Gallows were put up all around the city. A foreign eyewitness testified that 11,000 people were executed in Arzamas in three months.

By means of inhuman cruelty the tsar's waywodes hoped to instil fear into the peasants and force them into submission. But the leaders of the detachments held up bravely even under torture.

"What were you planning to do?" the hangmen asked them.

"We wanted to take Moscow and kill all of you boyars, nobles and clerks," was the reply.

Alyona, the woman leader of a peasant rebel force, was also seized. Condemned to be burnt at the stake, she calmly heard the death sentence and, dying, said

"If all had fought as I did, Prince Yuri would have fled from us for all he was worth."

By the beginning of 1671 the main hotbeds of the uprising on the right bank of the Volga had been suppressed by tsarist troops. After the poor Cossacks had left together with Razin for the Volga, only the wealthy Cossacks remained on the Don. In April, 1671, they seized Razin in Kagalnitski Gorodok and brought him to Moscow themselves. There Razin was subjected to excruciating tortures, but he did not utter a single groan. In June 1671, in Moscow, Razin was quartered (the executioners first cut off his hands and legs, then his head).

The Lower Volga region held out longest. After Razin had set out for Simbirsk, Ataman Vasili Uss remained in Astrakhan. Another companion-in-arms of Razin's, Fyodor Sheludyak, undertook a new campaign up the Volga in July 1671 and got as far as Simbirsk, but he was defeated and forced to return to Astrakhan. The following month a large tsarist army went down to Astrakhan. Fyodor Sheludyak defended the city for about two months, but at the end of November the tsar's troops took possession of Astrakhan, the last stronghold of the rebels. Sheludyak was hanged.

For a long time the people refused to believe that Razin had perished. The old folks said that Razin had merely gone into hiding and that the time would come when he would reappear on the Volga once more and send out a call to the Cossack and the peasant poor. The memory of the brave ataman, Stepan Timofeyevich Razin, lives in numerous folk songs which became known all over Russia.

*Rise thou, O sun, O thou ruddy one,*
*Over the mountains that tower so,*
*Over the speedwells that greenly grow,*
*Warm thou our bones· we are honest folk,*
*Poor though we are, yet we'll bear no yoke,*
*Thieves are we not, or your brigand's dread,*
*Stepan Razin—by him we're led.*

The great Russian poet, Pushkin, has called Stepan Razin the most poetic figure in Russian history.

After the suppression of the peasant uprisings at the end of the 17th century, the peasantry once more relapsed into passive resistance against their condition of serfdom, *i.e.*, going off into the forest, the steppe, or the borderland. The movement among the *Raskolniki* (dissenters) increased. Many settlements of the *Raskolniki* sprang up in the almost inaccessible woody regions along the Medveditsa

and Khoper rivers, left tributaries of the Don. Some of the *Raskolniki* leaders even preached non-resistance to violence, and suicide. Under the influence of their fanatical preachings, the dissenters at the end of the 17th century often resorted to mass suicide by burning themselves alive.

The uprising under Stepan Razin was the largest movement against feudal oppression in the 17th century. The insurgent Cossacks, peasants, serfs and the non-Russian population of the Volga seized a vast territory and inflicted a number of defeats upon the tsarist troops.

All the peasant wars in Europe and Russia represented a struggle against feudal oppression on the part of a peasantry which was enslaved or in the process of enslavement.

While stressing the progressive aspect of the peasant wars, Marx and Engels and, later, Lenin and Stalin pointed out the weak sides of these mass movements. The peasant movements were unorganized and spontaneous. Their weakness lay in the fact that their revolutionary forces acted isolatedly and were not united—a circumstance which permitted the government troops to crush each uprising as it occurred.

Lenin and Stalin, in pointing out the weakness of the peasant wars, showed that the peasants could not win without the help and leadership of the proletariat. They emphasized the fact that the leaders of the peasant uprisings in Russia were supporters of the tsar; they opposed the landlords but were in favour of a "good tsar."

Stalin has called the peasant wars "revolutions of the serf peasants" and has emphasized their revolutionary character inasmuch as the peasant wars were directed against feudalism and serfdom.

## *Chapter XVIII*

# CULTURE AND LIFE IN 17TH CENTURY RUSSIA

### 62. EDUCATION

The war against foreign intervention (1604-1618), the country's ruined economy (1618-1648) and the Baltic blockade impeded Russia's cultural development. Even among the great feudal nobility there were many uneducated and illiterate people. There were no properly organ-

ized schools. Only in Moscow was there a higher theological school ("Academy"). Reading and writing were taught by scribes at the churches or in the homes of wealthy people. The whole business of education was a matter of memorizing several church books. The first printed textbooks appeared in the 17th century. The pupils repeated the lesson after their teacher in a singsong. This gave rise to the folk saying: "Their ABC's they sing—the very rafters ring." For the slightest mistake the pupils were whipped with birch rods. The rod was even praised in song and verse. Literacy among women was a rare thing.

**Life of the Nobles and Merchants in the 17th Century.** The women in the homes of the boyars, nobles and merchants lived in complete seclusion until they married. They durst not show themselves to strangers, nor look at them. They spent the whole day either at embroidery work or at prayer. Their marriages were arranged for them by their parents. The bridegroom and bride generally did not see each other until the wedding day. No better was the position of the married woman. After marriage she became the obedient slave of her husband and could do nothing without his permission.



Tuition in Russia in the 17th century. *An engraving from Burtsev's "Alphabet," 1637*



Costume of the Russian boyars of the 17th century *According to Oelschlager (Olearius)*

The dress of the well-to-do was heavy and uncomfortable. The outer garment reached below the knees and the sleeves almost touched the ground, for which reason they were gathered up on the arms in numerous folds. It was difficult to walk and work in such clothing. Sometimes the rich people, for the sake of ostentation, dressed themselves in expensive fur coats when receiving guests.

Clothes worn on festive occasions were made of costly woolen cloth or Eastern silks, resplendent with precious stones, pearls and huge gold and silver buttons. The aristocracy wore very tall fur hats, slightly widening at the top. They were so heavy that it was difficult to turn one's head in them. On ceremonious occasions a boyar would even wear three headgear—a flat skull-cap, a hood, and his tall fur hat.

The hair was cut short. Beards were an object of special care. A man who could not grow a good beard was considered capable of doing evil deeds. The shaving of beards was punished as a sinful act.

**Cultural Influence of Western Europe.** A factor that largely contributed to the cultural development of the Russian state in the 17th century was the growing contact with the more cultured countries



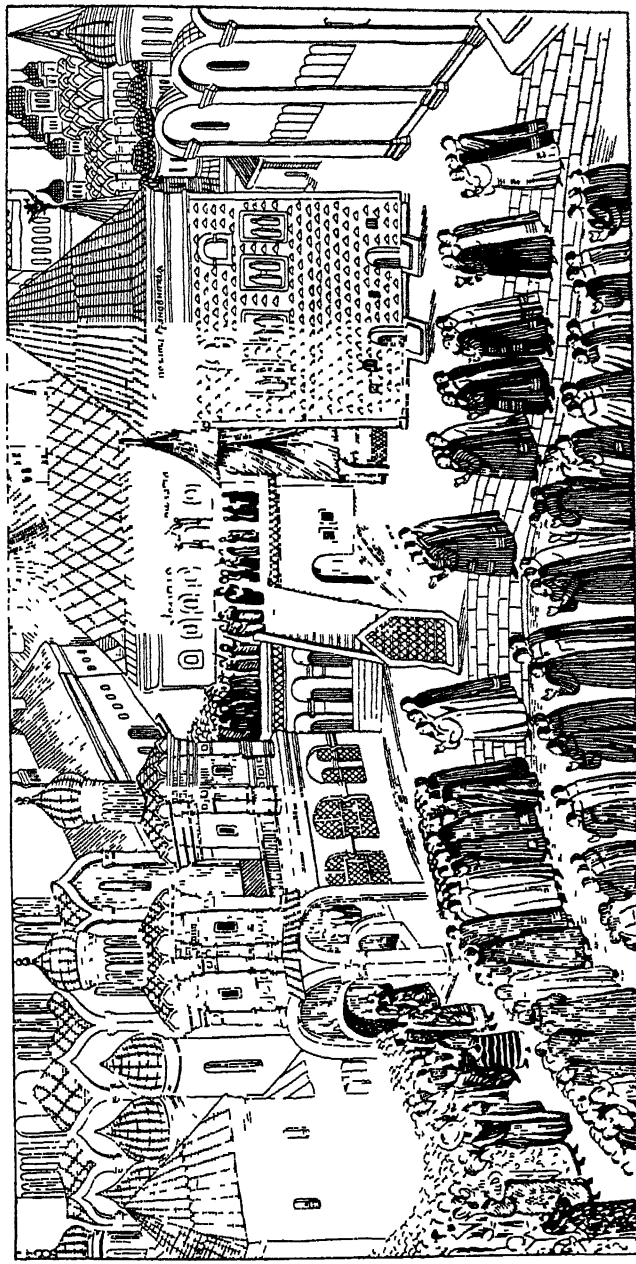
Boyar A.L. Ordin-Nashchokin *From a contemporary portrait from the Collection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

of the West. Greeks, Englishmen, Germans, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, and Poles appeared in Moscow as well as in other large cities. Some came for a short time for purposes of trade; others remained to live in the Russian cities. The government of Muscovy stimulated the migration of educated people, inviting military specialists, doctors, painters, and various artificers into its service. These foreigners were by no means all useful people. Many of them proved to be impostors who had come toRussia merely for personal profit or espionage. Others served conscientiously and gave the Russian people the benefit of their knowledge.

A settlement inhabited by foreigners sprang up in Moscow as far back as the end of the 16th century. Later it came to be called the "German Settlement." In the middle of the 17th century it was transferred to the Yauza River, not far from the village of Preobrazhenskoye. Russians who visited the German Settlement were to a certain extent able to familiarize themselves with European culture. Russians also began to make more frequent trips abroad during the 17th century. The nobles of Muscovy often went to England, Germany, France, Turkey and other European and Eastern countries as members of the Russian embassies. Attempts were also made by Russian tradesmen to take their merchandise to European cities, but these attempts met with failure since foreign merchants, fearing competition, did not permit Russian trade in their lands.

This acquaintance with foreign culture, especially with that of Western Europe, resulted in the gradual penetration of elements of that culture into the life of the well-to-do classes of the Russian population—the boyars and the merchants. Articles of foreign origin, such as "amusing" (*i.e.*, illustrated) books, paintings, maps, musical instruments, utensils, ornaments, etc., appeared in the homes of the rich.

Western European influence also affected the intellectual interests of the educated people of Russian society The boyar Ordin-Nashchokin, influential in the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich, ardently advocated



The Kremlin Palace, the Kremlin cathedrals and *Granovitaya Palata. From a drawing (1672)*

the reorganization of the state administration of Russia according to the best European models. The Ukraine also exerted considerable cultural influence, which became especially great after its incorporation into the Russian state. Kiev icon-painters, engravers, and other masters came to Moscow to work. The boyars invited Ukrainian teachers and tutors to their homes. Simeon Polotski, an educated Byelorussian monk, was a teacher in the family of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. He furthermore composed comedies, wrote verse and taught the Muscovites rhetorical art. His rhymed psalter is well known.

A large number of foreign works on history, the science of warfare, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, geography, natural science and other sciences were translated into Russian in the 17th century. The Russian reading public became acquainted with secular literature through the translations of novels dealing with chivalry and knight-errantry, and other stories. Russian imitations appeared, followed by original works descriptive of life among the nobles and the merchants. A considerable number of short satirical tales were written in the second half of the 17th century lampooning ecclesiastical drunkards, covetous judges, corrupt under-clerks, knavish nobles, etc. This literature strove to portray the truth of life, and was mundane and realistic.

An approach to realism was also noticeable in the development of Russian painting. Artists tried to depict life with greater exactness and truth. In portrait painting there was a striving to obtain a lifelike effect. The gifted Moscow artist, Simon Ushakov, compared art to a mirror, which reflects the real world as it sees it. This is what Ushakov wanted to see in painting too.

In the 17th century the Moscow court aristocracy was first introduced to the world of drama. Gotfried Gregory, a pastor from the German Settlement, who lived during the reign of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, formed a "comedy troupe" of Russian students and German actors, which presented plays on historical themes. Later a special building was put up for the theatre which also presented plays written by Russians. During the performance the tsar sat on a special bench in front of the stage, while the invited boyars stood up. The tsaritsa watched the performance from a screened loge.

Cultural development in the 17th century affected only the upper sections of the ruling class. The people remained in complete ignorance and darkness. The peasants lived in dirty huts which had no chimneys. The hearth was laid in the middle of the hut and the only outlet for the smoke was a small window, the only one in the house. The walls and ceiling were covered with soot. The priests and quack doctors played on the popular ignorance and treated the people for their ailments by means of exorcisms, "holy water" and various herbs. Mortality

was therefore very high, especially among children. During an epidemic entire cities and districts would be wiped out.

But in spite of the people's dire poverty and state of serfdom, folk art did not die out. Pilgrims and other people chanted *bylmy* (folk song-poems) and historical songs which told of outstanding events, of the struggle to throw off the Tatar yoke, and of the popular uprisings. The keen observation and native wit of the Russians were expressed in numerous proverbs and adages. Jugglers and buffoons presented short satirical skits in the public squares, in which they frequently ridiculed the priests and the boyars.

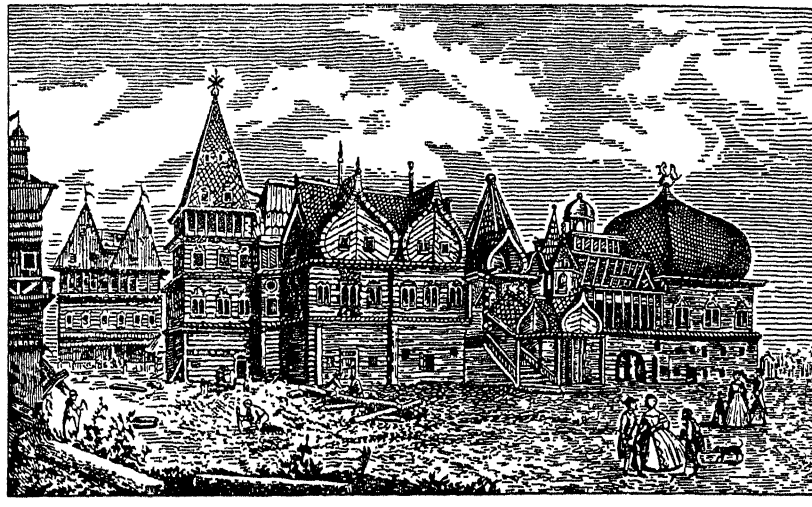
The church did its utmost at that time to suppress the art of the people. It forbade music and street performances. The patriarch Nikon even ordered all national musical instruments to be collected and burnt.

## 63. MOSCOW, THE CAPITAL

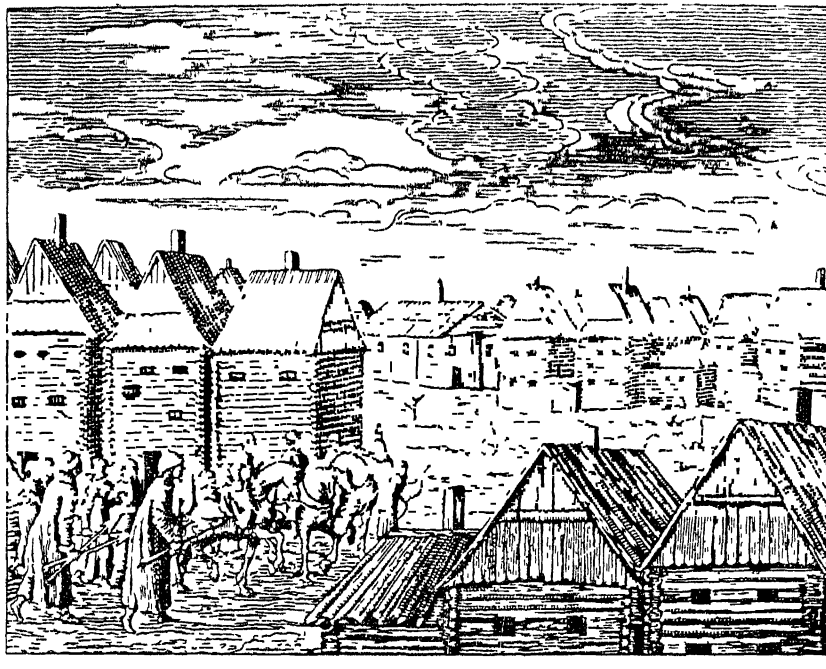
In the 17th century Moscow was a big and populous city. Foreigners compared it with the largest cities of Western Europe.

The Kremlin, the administrative centre of the capital, occupied the centre of Moscow. The tsar's palace, consisting of numerous buildings, as well as outhouses such as granaries, cellars, barns, stables, etc., was situated within the Kremlin. A large stone building housing the government offices faced Ivanovskaya Square, not far from the palace. The various decrees of the tsar and the boyars were announced to the assembled people from the steps of this building. Near the offices the clerks shouted out the royal ukases; here, too, convicted persons were publicly punished by whipping or scourging. This it was that gave rise to the popular saying "To shout all over Ivanovskaya." The residences of the boyars, the prelates and some of the rich merchants were also situated in the Kremlin.

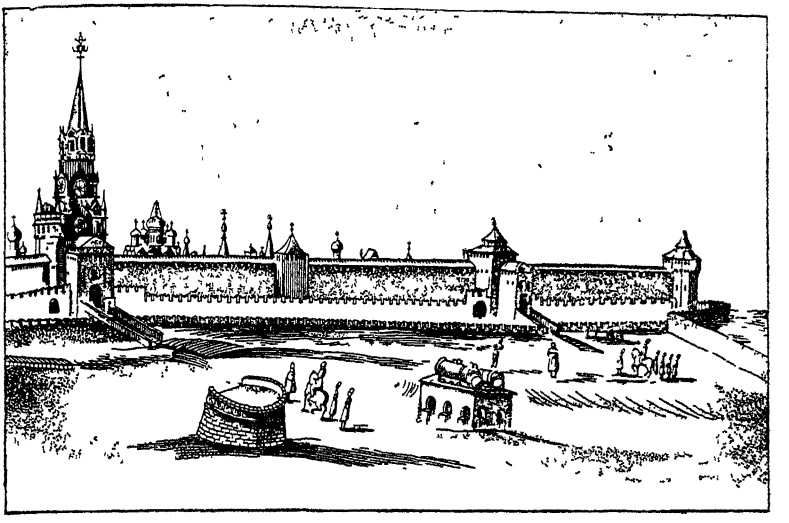
Moscow spread on all sides of the Kremlin As the city grew, the estates of the princes and boyars surrounding it, their villages and settlements inhabited by craftsmen and serfs became part of the city. Many of Moscow's streets and squares still bear the names of the meadows and villages that had once been within the city's precincts. The site occupied by Kudrinskaya Square (now called Square of the Uprising) was once the village of Kudrino. Polyanka (Field) Street, as its name implies, was once open country. The square facing the Kremlin came into existence at the end of the 15th century, taking the place of some buildings that had been destroyed by fire. Market trade was carried on in the square which was also a place of public executions. In the middle of the 17th century the square came to be called Red Square—probably because at that time it was the largest and most beautiful square in Moscow.



The Kolomna Palace near Moscow. *From an 18th century engraving*



A Moscow street in the middle of the 17th century. *According to Oelschlager (Olearius)*



The Kremlin during the reign of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich *According to Meyerberg*

New fortress walls were built around Moscow several times. In the thirties of the 16th century the walls of *Kitai Gorod* were built to adjoin the Kremlin walls. At the end of the 16th century a Russian craftsman by the name of Fyodor Kon, built the walls of *Bely Gorod* (White Town). During the reign of Boris Godunov the buildings outside *Bely Gorod* were surrounded by a wooden wall with high towers. The wooden wall was burnt down during the uprising against the Poles in the spring of 1611. A large earthen rampart was then erected in its place.

*Kitai Gorod* was the trading centre of Moscow. Most of it was occupied by rows of small booths huddled closely together. Each row traded in one particular article, such as meat, fish, ironwares, cloth, silk, lace, etc. The biggest trading took place in the *gostiniye dvory* (merchant inns) where visiting foreign merchants put up.

*Bely Gorod* was the residential quarter of the rich nobles and merchants. The large boyars' residences resembled country manors. Their spacious granaries and storerooms contained supplies of food brought from the countryside. Hundreds of serfs, the household servants of the boyar, lived in crowded outhouses.

Craftsmen and tradespeople resided in special suburbs or settlements called *slobody*. There were settlements that belonged to the tsar, to individual boyars and to monasteries. Kadashevskaya Sloboda was inhabited by weavers who made linen for the palace; Kuznetskaya

Sloboda (Smiths' Suburb) by smiths; Bronnaya (Armour Suburb) by craftsmen who made head-pieces and coats of mail, and so on. The homes of the poor in no way differed from the huts in the rural districts. In some places the houses stood in dense clusters; in others there were intervening commons or grassland enclosures used for pasturage. The streets were so narrow and crooked that two carts frequently were unable to pass each other. On some streets houses often jutted forward in such a way that they blocked the thoroughfare.

Moscow, like other European capitals, was a muddy city. Only a few streets were paved with round logs laid down in a row. The crowded state of the wooden buildings facilitated the rapid spread of fires, and Moscow was frequently burnt to the ground in a matter of hours.

Side by side with this, however, there were masterpieces of ancient Russian architecture which charmed Russians and still more foreigners, such as the magnificent Kremlin walls and towers, the belfry of Ivan the Great, numerous churches with tent-roof belfries, palaces, etc. Such was the capital of the Russian state in the 17th century.

## *Chapter XIX*

# THE PEOPLES OF SIBERIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

### 64. EASTERN SIBERIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

**The Peoples of Eastern Siberia.** In the 17th century the Russian state absorbed almost all of Eastern Siberia, from the Yenisei to the Sea of Okhotsk. This vast territory was inhabited by heterogeneous peoples in various stages of social and economic development. The land east of the Yenisei to the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk was occupied by tribes of the Paleo-Asiatic Evenki or Tunguses, as the Russians called them. They lived in large clans which often came into bloody conflict with each other. In the winter the Evenki hunted in the Siberian taiga; during the summer they went to the rivers for the fishing season. Portable tents covered with birch-bark in the summer and hides in the winter served as their homes. Domesticated deer were used for transportation purposes. The Evenki procured iron wares from their neighbours, but they had few such objects. Some tribes wore defensive armour made of bone plates. They liked colourful clothing and bright, sparkling ornaments, and tattooed their faces. The Evenki were a very warlike tribe. Their shamans, or wizard-priests, exercised great influence over them. The people believed that the shamans were able to invoke the spirits of the dead; on such occa-

sions these sorcerers would dress themselves in special garments and execute savage dances to the beating of a "sacred" tambourine.

At the mouth of the Amur lived the Paleo-Asiatics, the Nivkhi or Gilyaks. Their chief occupation was fishing.

The peoples inhabiting Northeastern Siberia—the Oduly (Yukagirs), Nymylans (Koryaks), Luoravetlans (Chukches), Itelmens (Kamchadales)—still lived the life of barbarians. They were not familiar with iron and employed flint and bone instead. They used arrows with flint tips, and stone knives. Their first acquaintance with iron was made through the Russians, whom they called in their folklore "the iron men."

The Upper Yenisei was inhabited since ancient times by the Turkic-Yenisei Kirghiz whom the Chinese called Khakasses. They have retained this name to the present day. The Kirghiz were a pastoral people who led a nomadic life in the steppes of the Yenisei. Their chieftains collected tribute in the form of furs from their forest-dwelling neighbours. Various hill tribes dwelt in the inaccessible gorges of the Altai Mountains. Some of these tribes were familiar with iron smelting and made weapons and other objects from iron. Their neighbours bought these objects or took them away by force as tribute. The Altai peoples were absorbed by the Oirots (a Mongol tribe), and their country came to be called Oirotia (now the Oirot Autonomous Region).

In the centre of the territory occupied by the Evenki, along the middle reaches of the Lena River, lived the Turkic-Yakuts. According to a Yakut legend, this people came from the south, from the Transbaikal region, and settled on the Lena River after a long and strenuous struggle against the Evenki. Yakut civilization in the 17th century was superior to that of its neighbours. The Yakuts engaged in cattle and horse breeding, which was facilitated by a profusion of excellent meadowlands along the middle reaches of the Lena. The Yakuts lived in timber huts warmed by fireplaces. They were familiar with the working of metals in a primitive way; their weapons (knives set in wooden handles), and especially their armour, were highly valued even by the Russians. In the 17th century the clan system among the Yakuts had begun to decline. Chieftains possessing large herds of cattle began to stand out from the mass of the tribe. They were served both by slaves and free Yakuts—poor people who had very little, if any, cattle of their own.

The territory of the Angara River, a tributary of the Yenisei, of Lake Baikal and the Upper Lena, was inhabited by Buryat-Mongol tribes. The chief pursuit of the Buryats was herding, but they also practised agriculture in a small way, even bartering barley and millet for furs and other wares. Hunting was a subsidiary occupation with them. The Buryat tribes were also ruled by chieftains.

The Daurs and their kindred Manchuria tribes lived along the

Amur River. In the 17th century the Daurs were already a highly civilized people. They lived on the land in villages and engaged in agriculture, sowing all kinds of cereals and growing different sorts of vegetables and fruit trees. They had a large number of cattle, and imported poultry from China. In addition to husbandry and livestock breeding the Daurs engaged to some extent in hunting fur-bearing animals, especially the sable, in which their land abounded. The rich Amur region attracted neighbouring Chinese feudal lords, who forced the inhabitants of this area to pay tribute to them in the form of sable skins. The Chinese taxgatherers, accompanied by Chinese merchants with their wares, came to the Amur every year. The Daurs obtained silk fabrics and metals from the Chinese, under whose influence they began to build houses with windows covered with thin sheets of paper (instead of glass) and dress themselves in the Chinese fashion. The Daurs had well-fortified cities.

## 65. CONQUEST AND COLONIZATION OF EASTERN SIBERIA

**Russian Penetration Eastward.** Eastern Siberia was conquered by the Siberian military servitors, *viz.*, the Cossacks and other military who served in Siberian towns and who set off on their own initiative, in small detachments, to conquer the "troublesome lands." Besides collecting the royal tribute, they confiscated considerable amounts of fur for themselves and derived large profits from the sale of captives into slavery. They took the elders and chieftains of the conquered tribes as hostages, and built small wooden fortresses on the subjugated lands. The Siberian military servitors were abetted by the traders who came in increasing numbers year after year in quest of sable skins. In their pursuit of the sable, the hunters sometimes penetrated into the most distant corners of Siberia before the military people arrived there. Groups of Cossacks and hunters kept pushing further east, to unexplored lands. In this manner all of Eastern Siberia from the Yenisei to the Sea of Okhotsk was acquired within several decades.

On the eastern shores of the Gulf of Ob was a land which the Russians called Mangazeya. From here, by going along the rivers and by portage, the traders made their way to the lower reaches of the Yenisei River (where now stands the city of Turukhansk). Despite the dangers of this long journey, the quest of rich fur prize drew large numbers of traders to Mangazeya every year. Under Tsar Boris Godunov a large military expedition was sent to Mangazeya, and after a determined struggle against the nomad Nentsi (Samoyedes), the Russians built a wooden fort here. Thus was seized the route to the Lower Yenisei. Somewhat later, the Russians penetrated from the middle region of

the Ob to the middle of the Yenisei, where in 1619 they built the city of Yeniseisk. From here they began to subjugate the Evenki, Buryats, and other peoples of the Yenisei region. About ten years later the city of Krasnoyarsk was founded on the Yenisei River. Here the Russian military servitors encountered serious resistance on the part of the Kirghiz.

Moving along the Angara River, a right tributary of the Yenisei, the Russians from Yeniseisk reached the great Lake Baikal. In the middle of the 17th century, not far from the spot where the Angara flows out of the lake, the fortified wintering station of Irkutsk (the future city of Irkutsk) was established. The indigenous Buryat tribes of the Angara basin and Lake Baikal desperately resisted the invaders. The Buryats of Baikal trekked to Mongolia. There they fell into oppressive bondage under the yoke of the Mongol feudal lords, and many of them preferred to go back and live under the rule of Muscovy.

A very important stage in the history of the conquest of Eastern Siberia by the Russians was the opening of a route from the Yenisei to the Lena. Rumours of the immense wealth to be found in furs along the "great river" east of the Yenisei began to attract traders and military people at an early date. Crowds of fortune-hunters made a rush almost simultaneously from two directions, from Yeniseisk and from Mangazeya. They attacked the Yakuts living on the Lena, robbed them of their furs and cattle, and took their women and children into captivity. In 1632 the Yeniseisk military servitors created a fort on the Lena—Yakutsk. Shortly afterwards waywodes were sent to Yakutsk from Moscow. Groups of military men and traders then set out from Yakutsk to discover and conquer "distant," "unknown" lands. They made their way to the northeast, as far as the Arctic Ocean, reaching the land of the Oduly (Yukagirs), from whom they exacted tribute.

**The Dezhnyov Expedition.** In 1648 a group of Russian merchants and traders conceived the idea of exploring the Arctic coast east of the mouth of the Kolyma, in quest of walrus breeding grounds, walrus tusks being a valuable article of trade. The expedition was headed by the Cossack Semyon Dezhnyov, from Yakutsk. It sailed from the mouth of the Kolyma on seven vessels, moving close to the shore. The craft used by the daring navigators were a makeshift affair of roughly assembled boards and most of them were wrecked. However, the vessel in which Dezhnyov sailed was carried out far to the east by a storm, into the strait dividing Asia from America (Bering Strait). No one in Europe at the time knew that Asia was separated from America by a strait. Dezhnyov's voyage solved this question. Today the extreme northeastern cape of Asia is called Cape Dezhnyov.

While these discoveries were being made in the northeast ex-

ploration was in progress along the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Amur. From the Aldan River, a tributary of the Lena, the military went as far as the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, where they erected the fort of Okhotsk. The Okhotsk Evenki resisted for a long time but were finally compelled to submit to the force of firearms.

**The Struggle for the Amur.** Traders from the Amur brought news of the wealth of the land of the Daurs (the Amur region), and of the large number of sables to be found there. In 1643 the Yakutsk waywode fitted out a military expedition to the Amur under the command of Vasili Poyarkov. The latter succeeded in reaching the Zeya River, a tributary of the Amur, where he established a small settlement. However, before long his detachment ran short of food. At first they ate pine bark and roots, then when the snow melted, grass, and finally reached such an extremity that they were forced to eat dead bodies. Poyarkov barely managed to repel the attacks of the Daurs against his settlement. In the spring he built some vessels and sailed along the Zeya and down the Amur, with the survivors of his crew. Poyarkov wintered at the mouth of the Amur and collected tribute from the Nivkhi (Gilyaks). Early the following summer the detachment under Poyarkov sailed into the open sea and coasted northwards. Only in July 1646, exactly three years after the expedition had started out, and after enduring the greatest privations, the survivors reached Yakutsk.

In spite of all the hardships that attended expeditions to the Amur, the wealth of this region continued to attract enterprising men. In 1649 a trader by the name of Yerofei Khabarov assembled volunteers at his own expense, supplied them with weapons and food, and set out with them to conquer the "Amur peoples." For three years Khabarov and his troops fought to get possession of the Amur provinces. He forced the population into submission, collected tribute and seized captives. The Chinese, who until then had collected tribute from the people of the Amur region, were reluctant to yield their booty to the Russians. A large Chinese army unexpectedly attacked the Khabarov settlement on the Amur. In spite of their inferior numbers, the Russians repulsed the attack and compelled the Chinese to retreat. But the position of Khabarov's detachment became increasingly difficult; it was impossible to obtain food anywhere, and Khabarov himself had been recalled to Moscow. Those of his detachment that remained were annihilated by the Chinese.

Muscovy did not relinquish the idea of annexing the Amur lands, but decided to act more cautiously. The Nerchinsk fort was founded on one of the northern tributaries of the Amur. Fifteen years after Khabarov's expedition the Cossacks established the small outpost of Albazin on the Amur itself. The Chinese emperor, desirous of dominating the Amur himself, demanded that this outpost be destroyed.

His demand not being acceded to, a large Chinese army equipped with guns besieged the stronghold and compelled the small garrison to evacuate it; the outpost of Albazin was razed. A year later the Russians rebuilt Albazin and strongly fortified it. The Chinese besieged the fort again, but this time the garrison, in spite of the great disparity in numbers, successfully withstood the furious bombardment for almost a year. Peace negotiations put an end to the siege. In 1689 peace was concluded in Nerchinsk. According to the terms of the treaty the boundaries established between Russian and Chinese possessions followed the Argun River and the Stanovoi and Yablonovoi mountain ranges; in this way the Amur and its adjoining lands were seized by China. Albazin was destroyed again.

**Revolt of the Indigenous Population of Siberia.** Within a very brief space of time the Russian state took possession of a vast territory stretching from the Urals to the Sea of Okhotsk. The indigenes were forced to pay heavy tribute. Revolts against the tsarist rule therefore frequently broke out in Siberia. The Yakuts rebelled on several occasions; once they almost succeeded in destroying Yakutsk. The Buryats and the Okhotsk Evenki fought long and persistently against the tsarist conquerors. A big uprising took place in Western Siberia during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich. These rebellions were suppressed. The disunited Siberian peoples were powerless in their struggle against the centralized Russian state.

**Colonization of Siberia.** Despite its remoteness, Russians began to settle in Siberia in the 17th century. The government sent parties of people to Siberia for military service and other purposes. Very soon the government started the practice of sending convicts to Siberia, as well as the poor who rebelled against the boyars and the nobles. On the other hand, peasants who found life hard to endure under the landlord oppression and tsarist rule migrated of their own accord in order to escape from hunger and persecution in their native land, and went to the Urals in the hope of finding a better life there.

The government had to maintain a large number of Cossacks and other military people in the Siberian towns and settlements. To provide them with food it was necessary to introduce agriculture into Siberia. The peasants were given land in Siberia and loans in the form of money and seed. In return for this they tilled a definite area "for the sovereign" and delivered about half of their crop to the state every year. The only difference between the position of the peasants in Siberia and the serfs of European Russia was that the former worked for a feudal state instead of private landlords. Many Russians came to Siberia to follow trade and various other pursuits. A large number of them remained in Siberia, established their own farms or entered the military service. By the end of the 17th century Western Siberia was studded with Russian settlements and villages.

Russian colonization stimulated the development of Siberia's productive forces. In some places agriculture made great strides. By the end of the 17th century the southern districts of Western Siberia were devoted entirely to agriculture and, according to the descriptions of travellers, they represented a densely populated territory with good ploughland. Russian colonists contributed greatly to the discovery and exploration of Northern Asia. Siberia's natural resources, its iron ore and salt mines, began to be exploited. At the end of the 17th century Semyon Remezov of the Siberian military even compiled a geographical atlas of Siberia. The accounts of Russian travellers and their maps were frequently cited by Western European geographers in their scientific works on Asia.

The Russian population of Siberia as well as the natives suffered keenly from the persecution and extortions of the tsarist waywodes and from the heavy burdens imposed on them by the state. The Russians frequently rebelled against the administration, the natives often joining them in their struggle against the common enemy.

The conquest of Siberia was of tremendous significance to the Russian state. Furs were obtained from Siberia for trade with Western Europe, China and Persia. Furs were also a source of revenue for national defence and for the payment of the nobles' salaries.

## *Chapter XX*

# TRANSCAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

### 66. TRANSCAUCASIA IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

It took Transcaucasia a long time to recover from the devastation wrought by the Tatar invasion. Agriculture and trade had fallen into decay. The economic ties among the separate regions had been severed. The feudal disunity of the country became greater.

At the end of the 15th century Georgia was broken up into the kingdoms of Karthlia (the capital of which was Tiflis), Kakhetia and Imeretia, and the principalities of Mingrelia, Meshkhetia, Guria, Svanetia and Abkhazia. Each of these small states consisted, in its turn, of a large number of still smaller feudal domains. Split up and rendered impotent by intestine warfare, Georgia was unable to offer effective resistance to outside enemies. Trancaucasia had two powerful empires on its borders—Turkey and Persia. In the 16th century a fierce struggle broke out between them for possession of Transcaucasia, which was ravaged by both countries. The Turko-Persian yoke

lay heavily upon Transcaucasia and the Black Sea region. Azerbaijan was seized by the Persians in the beginning of the 16th century. It then alternately became the prey of the Turks and of the Persians, which had a disastrous effect upon the population. In 1555 Turkey and Persia concluded an agreement for the mutual division of Georgia. Western Georgia (Imeretia) went to Turkey, and Eastern Georgia (Karthlia and Kakhetia) to Persia. The Georgian kingdom and principalities thus became vassals of their neighbour states.

In an endeavour to re-establish their independence, the Kakhetian kings appealed for help to the Muscovy tsars. In 1586 an agreement was concluded between Muscovy and Kakhetia, by which the Kakhetian rulers agreed to become the vassals of Muscovy. However, the Russian state was too far away to render military aid to its allies. The struggle between Turkey and Persia in Transcaucasia continued. In 1614 Kakhetia fell a prey to Persian invasion. The land was ravaged with unprecedented savagery. Over 150,000 Georgians were transported to Persia. The ruler of Kakhetia, Teimuraz, was again compelled to appeal to Moscow, where Mikhail Fyodorovich reigned at the time. But Russia did not help Georgia During the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich, Teimuraz himself went to Moscow to try to secure aid. He was received with great honour, but Georgia did not receive any assistance this time either, as Russia was waging a difficult war against Turkey and Poland for the Ukraine. Thus as far back as the 17th century Georgia chose the right road of union with Russia.

Turkish and Persian invasions reduced Transcaucasia to utter ruin. The once flourishing cities of Transcaucasia, Tbilisi and Kutaisi, were desolate. The peasantry particularly were grievously affected. In order to retain their possessions, Georgian and Armenian landowners embraced the Mohammedan faith, thereby ensuring for themselves the support of the Turkish and Persian feudal lords. The peasants were utterly landless and were converted into so-called "purchased serfs." The Karthlian King Rostom, a henchman of the Persian shah, in the middle of the 17th century confirmed that the peasants had no right to leave the lands of their lords. Only the dauntless mountaineers, the Khevssury and certain communities of free Svanetia were able to defend their independence.

The feudal lords strove to subjugate the mountain communities which still retained their liberty. Thus the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan peasants suffered from a double yoke—that of local and of foreign feudal lords.

## 67. CENTRAL ASIA IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

Two large Uzbek states were formed in Central Asia in the beginning of the 16th century: Bokhara and Khiva. Their population consisted

of Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkomans. The Uzbeks for the most part were a nomadic pastoral race, but some of them settled on the land. The Turkomans were nomads and roamed with their herds of cattle between the Caspian Sea and the Amu Darya River. The chief occupation of the Tajiks was agriculture, which thrived particularly in the fertile, irrigated districts. In the towns the Tajiks engaged in trading and the crafts. At the end of the 16th century the Karakalpaki (Turki), who had formerly roamed north of the Aral Sea, made their appearance on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River.

The descendants of the Uzbek conqueror Sheibani established themselves in the Bokhara khanate. An independent dynasty of Uzbek khans ruled separately in Khiva. Both states were divided into a large number of small principalities ruled by the relatives of the khan. The ruling group was the tribal nobility, the begs (landlords), who gradually appropriated vast demesnes.

The Bokhara state grew very strong at the end of the 16th century during the reign of Abdula Khan, who exterminated nearly all his relatives and annexed their lands to his domains. In his fight for supremacy, Abdula Khan enjoyed the support of the Mohammedan clergy. At the end of the 16th century the dynasty of the Sheibanids came to an end. Under the new dynasty the power passed into the hands of the feudal lords, the Uzbek begs who had formerly represented the tribal nobility and had been the khan's satraps but who had now become independent feudal rulers. The territory of Bokhara, as that of Khiva, broke up into small, independent domains.

The increasing feudal oppression led to frequent popular revolts.

The big Central Asiatic cities (Bokhara, Samarkand, Khiva and others) had a large population of craftsmen and tradespeople in the 17th century. Caravan trade connected these cities with the markets of Russia, China, India and Persia. The cities, especially Samarkand, acquired a number of beautiful structures. In the 16th and 17th centuries an Uzbek nationality was formed and an Uzbek culture, art and literature were created. Persian and Tajik literature exercised a great influence on Uzbek literature. Poets at the court of the Bokhara khan sang of successful campaigns and military prowess.

Economic ties between Central Asia and the Russian state grew stronger in the 17th century. Cotton and silk fabrics, raw silk and jewelry were exported from Central Asia to Russia via Astrakhan. Central Asia imported from Russia furs, walrus tusks, and articles of wood and metal.

# IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE U.S.S.R.

## *(From ancient times until the end of the 17th century)*

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| 8th cent. B C. . . . . | The Urartu kingdom at its zenith |
| 8th—3rd cent. B C. . . | Domination of the Scythians in the Black Sea steppes |
| 7th cent. B. C. . . . . | Rise of Greek colonies on the Black Sea |
| 2nd cent. B. C. . . . . | Revolt of slaves in the kingdom of Bosporus |
| End of 4th cent. of our era . | Invasion of Huns |
| 6th—8th cent. of our era . | Turkic khanate |
| 7th cent. of our era . . | Conquest of Central Asia and Transcaucasia by the Arabs |
| 8th cent. of our era . . | Formation of the Khazar state |
| End of 8th cent. of our era. | Mokanna revolt against Arabs in Central Asia |
| 9th cent. of our era . . . | Break-up of the Arab caliphate |
| Second half of 9th cent. . . | Formation of the Samanid kingdom |
| 860 . . . . . | Campaign of Rūs against Constantinople |
| 911 . . . . . | Treaty of Oleg with the Greeks |
| 941 . . . . . | Campaign of Igor against Byzantium |
| 945 . . . . . | Igor's agreement with the Greeks |
| 967—971 . . . . . | War between Svyatoslav and the Byzantine emperor |
| 988. . . . . | Agreement between Vladimir Svyatoslavich and Byzantium, providing for adoption of Christianity by Kiev Rūs |
| 1015 . . . . . | Death of Vladimir Svyatoslavich |
| 1019—1054. . . . . | Reign of Yaroslav the Wise |
| 1068 . . . . . | Uprising in Kiev |
| 1089—1125. . . . . | Reign of David the Builder in Georgia |
| 1113 . . . . . | Uprising in Kiev |
| 1113—1125 . . . . . | Reign of Vladimir Monomachus |
| 1122 . . . . . | Liberation of Tiflis from the power of the Seljuks |
| 1136 . . . . . | Uprising in Novgorod |
| 1147 . . . . . | First mention of Moscow |
| 1157—1174 . . . . . | Reign of Andrei Bogolyubski |
| 1169 . . . . . | Taking of Kiev by Andrei Bogolyubski's troops |
| 1176—1212 . . . . . | Reign of Vsevolod (the "Large Nest") |

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| 1184—1213 | Reign of Tamara in Georgia |
| 1185 | Battle between Igor Svyatoslavich and the Polovtsi |
| 1202 | Founding of Livonian Order of Knights of the Sword |
| 1206 | Temuchin proclaimed Genghis Khan |
| 1216 | The Battle of Lipitsa |
| 1223 | Battle on the Kalka River |
| 1227 | Death of Genghis Khan |
| 1237 | Invasion of Northeastern Rūs by Batu |
| 1237 | Merging of the Livonian Order and the Teutonic Order |
| 1238 | Uprising of Tarab in Samarkand |
| 1240 | Victory of Alexander Yaroslavich over the Swedes on the Neva River |
| 1242 | Defeat of the German knights on Lake Chudskoye (Lake Peipus) by Prince Alexander Yaroslavich (Nevsky). (The Battle on the Ice.) |
| 1255 | Daniel of Galich proclaimed king |
| 1316—1341 | Reign of Gedymin in Lithuania |
| 1325—1341 | Reign of Ivan Danilovich Kalita in Moscow |
| 1328 | Ivan Kalita—Grand Prince of Vladimir |
| 1359—1389 | Reign of Dimitry Ivanovich (Donskoi) |
| 1370—1405 | Rule of Timur |
| 1377—1392 | Reign of Jagiello in Lithuania |
| 1380 | The Battle of Kulikovo |
| 1385 | Union of Lithuania and Poland |
| 1389—1425 | Reign of Grand Prince Vasili Dimitrievich |
| 1392—1430 | Reign of Grand Duke Witowt in Lithuania |
| 1410 | The Battle of Grunewald |
| 1425—1462 | Reign of Grand Prince Vasili Vasilievich the Blind |
| 1437 | Founding of the Kazan khanate |
| Middle of the 15th cent. | Formation of the Kazakh Horde |
| 1462—1505 | Reign of Grand Prince Ivan III |
| 1475 | Conquest of the Crimea by the Turks |
| 1478 | Novgorod annexed to the Russian state |
| 1479—1515 | Rule of Mengli Girai |
| 1480 | Liberation of the Russian people from the Tatar yoke. |
| 1485 | Tver annexed to the Russian state |
| 1497 | Ivan III's "Code of Laws" |
| 1502 | Remnants of the Golden Horde destroyed by the Crimean Tatars |
| 1503 | Chernigov-Seversk annexed to the Russian state |
| 1505—1533 | Reign of Grand Prince Vasili III |

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| 1510 | Pskov annexed to Russian state |
| 1514 | Smolensk annexed to Russian state |
| 1533—1584 | Reign of Ivan IV (Grozny). Took the title of tsar in 1547 |
| 1547 | Uprising in Moscow |
| 1550 | "Code of Laws" of Ivan IV |
| 1552 | Taking of Kazan |
| 1553 | Discovery of the northern sea passage to Russia by the English |
| 1556 | Annexation of Astrakhan |
| 1558—1583 | Livonian war |
| 1564 | Publication of first Russian book, printed by Ivan Fyodorov in Moscow |
| 1565—1572 | *Oprichnina* |
| 1569 | Union of Poland and Lithuania. Lublin Union |
| 1581 | Beginning of Yermak's expedition to Siberia |
| 1581 | Peasants' right to leave on St. George's Day repealed |
| 1584—1598 | Reign of Fyodor Ivanovich |
| 1586 | Vassal dependence of Kakhetia on Moscow |
| 1598—1605 | Reign of Boris Fyodorovich Godunov |
| 1605—1606 | Reign of False Dimitry I |
| 1606—1610 | Reign of Vasili Ivanovich Shuiski |
| 1606—1607 | Peasant uprising led by Ivan Bolotnikov |
| 1612 | Liberation of Moscow by popular levy of Minin and Pozharski |
| 1613—1645 | Reign of Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov |
| 1614 | Devastation of Georgia by Persian Shah Abbas |
| 1645—1676 | Reign of Alexei Mikhailovich |
| 1648—1650 | City insurrections in Russia |
| 1648 | Expedition of Semyon Dezhnyov |
| 1648 | Beginning of popular uprising in the Ukraine (under leadership of Bogdan Khmelnitski) against Polish domination |
| 1649 | *Sobornoye Ulozheniye* (Code of Laws) |
| 1649 | Peace of Zborov |
| 1654 | Decree of Pereyaslavl Rada on the union of Ukraine with Russia |
| 1662 | Uprising in Moscow |
| 1662 | Uprising in Bashkiria and Western Siberia |
| 1667 | Andrusovo Truce between Russia and Poland |
| 1667—1671 | Popular uprising under leadership of Stepan Razin |